BLACK PARTRIDGE

OR THE FALL OF FORT DEARBORN

By

COLONEL H.R.GORDON

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COLONEL H. R. GORDON

Author of "Red Jacket," "Logan," "Pontiac," etc.

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in 1804. The distance between the two posts named was nearly two hundred miles, the trail connecting them being well marked, and leading around the southern end of Lake Michigan. It was sometimes the custom for persons making the journey to use a canoe between Fort Dearborn and the southern end of the lake. This saved about a fifth of the distance and gave a pleasant change in the method of travel.

The Indian chief who appeared at Fort Wayne belonged to the Pottawatomie tribe and was one of their most famous sachems. He has been called Black Bird by some writers, but is more generally remembered as Black Partridge. He had great native force of character, was personally brave and was held in high regard, not only along the frontier, but by our government because of his friendship for American settlers. His shrewd counsel, his tact, and his intrepidity saved disaster to the settlements more than once.

As proof of the gratitude of our government to this remarkable Indian, I may give a brief description of the silver medal presented to him and which he always wore where it could be plainly seen, pendent from a cord around his neck. It was once my good fortune to hold this interesting token in my hands, and I remember it clearly. The face contained a bust of our President, encircled by these words: "James Madison, President of the United States, 1809." On

the obverse or other side were the figures of a tomahawk and Indian pipe crossed, with two clasped hands beneath, and between and among these emblems were the words "Peace and Friendship."

This pretty medal was a present from the Great Father at Washington, and old frontiersmen who knew Black Partridge have told me that the grim old sachem found it hard to forgive any one who talked with or stood before him for a few minutes without noticing his handsome medal and making inquiries about it.

So you will understand that when he showed himself at many of the widely separated frontier posts he was certain of a warm welcome. He had been at Fort Wayne before and was recognized the moment he showed himself in front of the gate leading through the stockades, and was admitted without a moment's question. Just now, however, we are more interested in the youngster who accompanied him than in the famous leader of the Pottawatomies.

This lad was Jethro Judd, and he was the son of a trader employed by the American Fur Company, formed by John Jacob Astor, and sanctioned by Congress in 1809. Because of the long and toilsome journeys which the elder Judd had to make through the unsettled wilderness of the West and Northwest, he placed his only child, at the mother's death, in charge of the well-known trader John H. Kinzie, at

Fort Dearborn, of whom I shall have more to tell you later. Kinzie and Judd were old friends, and the kind-hearted trader was more than glad to do this favor for his former comrade.

You need hardly be told that when young Judd was carried to the foot of the lake in the canoe of Black Partridge, and thence conducted over the Indian trail to Fort Wayne, it did not take him and Auric Kingdon long to become warm friends. The first hour of their interchange of confidences brought two interesting facts to light, which had much to do in deepening their mutual affection. These facts were certainly strange coincidences. They were both born on the same day of the same year, and their mothers, whose Christian name was "Mary," both died in the same year. Such little matters as these, while they can have no real meaning, have a marked effect in bringing two lads into closer ties of affection. It may be said that from that day the two boys became devoted to each other, and their mutual regard was higher than that felt by either for any other person.

Now, when neighbors are separated by a distance of two hundred miles of wilderness and solitude, it can hardly be expected that they will exchange visits very often. In almost any circumstances the one spoken of would have been the last between the two boys, but such was not the fact. It may be said that

the long stretch of forest which one had to traverse to reach the other gave zest to the journey. So it came about that not a year had passed after their first meeting in which one of them did not make one and sometimes two visits to the other. These calls naturally lasted for a week or two. Many were the delightful rambles they had in the woods, hunting for the abundant game that was always to be found, sometimes staying for days among the Indians, who at that time were quite friendly to the whites, or paddling long distances over the great inland sea, on whose western shore stood Fort Dearborn, the germ of the wonderful city that grew into being during the century following the planting of the frontier post.

In one instance, the two boys paddled all the way to Mackinaw, away up at the northern end of the lake, and were absent from Fort Dearborn for several weeks. It was on that memorable voyage that Jethro Judd escaped being shot by a vagrant Winnebago, as by a hair's breadth. They kept the secret, but decided to make their explorations thereafter in other directions.

At irregular intervals, messengers visited the frontier posts, carrying orders from headquarters, as well as news of the outside world. Sometimes these messengers were Indian runners and occasionally a white scout, who liked such business. Whenever the chance offered, Jethro sent a letter to Auric at Fort Dearborn,

and the latter was equally quick to use the return post. It was by this means that the two lads arranged to meet on the southern shore of Lake Michigan, on a certain Wednesday in August, 1812, Auric making the journey thither from Fort Wayne, while Jethro was to paddle southward from Fort Dearborn. You will bear in mind that the latter had to go only about one fourth as far as his friend was obliged to tramp through the wilderness.

When you are told that precisely the same journey had been made several times by the young comrades without the slightest hitch, you will see that they had a right to believe the same pleasing experience would be repeated. Barring accidents, they knew to within an hour the time required for the task. Each was the owner of a tough, fleet pony, which he knew how to ride well, but the animal was not used on the excursions named, with the exception of the one made when the boys were fourteen years old. In that instance they met at the lower end of the lake, and then Jethro turned back, and the couple kept to the trail all the way to Fort Dearborn. They then agreed that such a ride was monotonous and that the comparatively short voyage by canoe added a pleasing variety.

The outing with which I open my story was the most remarkable in more than one respect that had ever come to the youths. As I have said, each could

calculate the time of his arrival at the meeting-place on the southern shore of the lake, to an hour, provided no unforeseen accident prevented. The trail from Fort Wayne was so well marked, and Auric was so familiar with it, that it was impossible for him to go astray. Substantially he had to tramp a distance of about a hundred and fifty miles, but the way was not hard, and he looked upon the task much as you look upon a ramble through the country in springtime. Young, strong, vigorous, and in high spirits, it was the most delightful kind of a treat. When he felt tired he could sit down and rest. The easy, swinging gait was pleasing exercise; water was so abundant at different points that he need never thirst; a little skill was all that was necessary to bring down a wild turkey, or larger game, though the season was not the most favorable in that respect. The weather was so warm that it was more enjoyable to sleep out of doors than under a roof, and that, too, without the blanket which Auric's parents pressed upon him, but which he declined; the ground was comparatively level with few large streams, and he had allowed himself enough time to relieve the journey of everything in the nature of toil or labor. His calculation was to spend three nights on the road, arriving in sight of the lake at about noon on the fourth day. It was still easier for Jethro Judd to carry out his part, since the distance was so much less and was entirely by water.

For the present we must confine our attention to the youth who had come from the southwest and was steadily pushing toward Fort Dearborn.

Remembering the sultry season and the abundance of game, it need hardly be said that he travelled in the lightest possible costume. He wore a cap which you and I would have found burdensome, even in cool weather. Our forefathers seemed to have slight idea of the use of the cool hats of the present day, but almost invariably wore fur caps which must have been anything but comfortable even in autumn, or early spring. There was the short coat, with a band around the waist like a sash. Behind this was thrust the hunting knife, the handle projecting upward where it could be snatched forth on the instant needed. The thick trousers stopped at the knees, below which were woollen stockings, the boy being shod with strong, coarse shoes, capable of the severest wear. Bullet pouch and powder-horn were suspended by thick cords from the neck, and a few trifling but needed articles were carried in the big pockets of the coat.

Each boy had an excellent rifle, which of course was of the old flintlock pattern. The youths were sturdy and rugged, Auric being an inch or two taller than his friend, though it may be doubted whether there was any difference in their strength or activity.

Now, if you will reflect a moment, you will recall that the summer of 1812 was a momentous one in the

history of our country. On the 19th of June, Congress declared war with Great Britain. There being no telegraph in those days, the news required days and weeks to reach every part of our country. In some instances more than a month passed before it was known to the frontier posts. Fort Wayne did not hear of it until a messenger arrived from General Hull at Detroit, early in August.

Almost the first thing done by Lieutenant Kingdon at Fort Wayne was to forbid his son making his visit to Fort Dearborn. While he sympathized with the boy's disappointment, he resolutely shook his head in answer to his pleadings.

"There is really no reason, Mr. Kingdon, why you should forbid him this pleasure," said the captain, in his mild, pleasing manner, when his subordinate told him of his decision.

"The news of the war must be known to the Indians between here and Fort Dearborn; you know they have a way of learning such things long before we are able to find them out."

"What of it?"

"Since England understands so much better than we how to manage the redskins, all the tribes, with hardly an exception, will fight for her. I do not think it will be safe for Auric to enter their country, while they are restless and ill-disposed toward the Americans."

"You are only partly right; we have a good many friends among the Indians, like Black Partridge, the Pottawatomie chief; he has great influence and there are others like him; he is especially friendly to young Judd, and therefore friendly to all Judd's friends; Auric is known to many of the Indians, and I don't believe he has an enemy among them."

"I wish I could agree with you, captain, but I can do so only to the extent that what you say may have been true down to the time when the tidings of the declaration of war reached the redskins. You know their nature too well to rest much hope on their friendship; many of the Indians under old Opecancanough sat at the tables of their white friends at Jamestown, nearly two hundred years ago, and tomahawked them an hour later; Pontiac's warriors scalped the men who had proved themselves their best friends; it has always been so and will be so to the end."

"There's a good deal of truth in what you say, but you overlook one fact. Our authorities will do the most they can to win the different tribes to their side; the British may checkmate us — more than likely they will — but the measures that each will set on foot will hold the Indians undecided for some weeks if not months to come; the danger of an American trusting himself in the hands of the Indians is no greater to-day than it was six months or a year ago, nor will the peril increase for some time to come,

though when the painted demons *do* declare themselves, look out!

"Now, Auric is virtually a man, though he is not seventeen years old. He has good sense, and knowledge of the Indian character; I believe he can make himself understood in some of their tongues?"

His father smiled and nodded.

"Yes; he has a curious facility for picking up their lingo; I heard him holding conversation with Black Partridge and he seemed to do it with as much ease as you and I are conversing this minute. I shouldn't be surprised if he has learned how to jabber in the tongue of some of the other tribes, though I don't see when or where he ever got the chance to learn."

"You see, Mr. Kingdon, that your son has peculiar opportunities for gaining the most valuable kind of information for us. His knowledge of the Indian tongue will be of great help; he is sure to come in contact with chiefs and warriors from whom he will get a clearer view of the real situation than any of our scouts could gain; I am sure he will be in no more personal danger than he was last summer, when he made the journey to and from the foot of Lake Michigan, without a solitary companion, and slept each night in one of the lodges of the Winnebagoes or Miamis or some other tribe. I shall be surprised if the news which Auric picks up on this journey does

not prove to be of the highest importance, not to us alone, but to our government."

Lieutenant Kingdon was impressed by the words of his superior officer. The view presented had not occurred to him. He was a patriot and did not hesitate in his decision.

"I cannot deny the force of what you say, captain; Auric, God willing, shall make the trip to Fort Dearborn and, I trust, back to Fort Wayne."

CHAPTER II

PUSHING TO THE NORTHWEST

And so it came about that Auric Kingdon left Fort Wayne on a warm, sunshiny morning in the month of August, 1812, to meet his friend, Jethro Judd, on the southern shore of Lake Michigan. He kissed his father good-by, and with his rifle over his shoulder set off in such high spirits that his whistling and singing were heard by his smiling father and the other officers, who watched him until he passed from sight over the winding trail, which entered the wood a short distance away and led northwest to old Fort Dearborn, from which point Jethro Judd was soon to set out to meet him.

Auric was accompanied by his favorite dog Zinc, though why he should receive such a name would be hard to tell, since there was nothing zincous in his nature. He was presented to him when a pup by a friendly Miami, who sometimes acted as messenger between the frontier posts. He was a mongrel, not very intelligent and certainly homely in appearance. But he was a good hunter, and had served his master well on many of his excursions in quest of game. He

was as delighted as the lad, and scampered through the woods, first on one side of the trail and then the other, pretending sometimes to have struck the scent of game, and scurrying many rods in advance, yelping with excitement, as if he were on the heels of a fleeing bear or deer. Then he would disappear for an hour or more, to come trotting soberly back, his whole manner saying:

"The bear was of unusual size and fierceness; I thought it best to kill him where I had him at bay; but the season is not good, and knowing you wouldn't care to eat his flesh, when you can get plenty that is much better, I didn't bring back his carcase with me."

The trail led through the wilderness, sometimes over slight elevations, then across stretches of prairie and again plunging into the depths of the woods, but it was never difficult at any time to travel except when the larger streams were swollen. Auric could have made better time without trouble, but there was no need to do so, and it was pleasanter to keep moving than to sit on the shore and await the coming of his friend in his canoe.

The path which the youth used was an old one that had been well worn by the hoofs of horses, though far more had passed over it on foot. In making such trails the old Indian custom was invariably followed. Instead of riding abreast, the horsemen or footmen tramped after one another in single file, except when

the open plain made it easy to ride side by side. There were numerous places where the path was narrow, and others where a squad of cavalry could have galloped in loose order without inconvenience. This was fortunate in one respect, for, as the sun climbed the sky and the temperature rose, Auric could walk most of the time in the cool shade, well protected from the hot rays.

As for Zinc, he seemed never to grow tired, though now and then, when he allowed sight to be caught of him, his tongue was seen to be lolling from his mouth and he panted like a steam-engine. He whisked here and there, in and out among the trees, occasionally halting and glancing at his master as if to say: "Don't worry; I'm keeping guard over you, and you're safe."

Watches or timepieces were such a luxury a century ago that not one person in a hundred felt able to own one. At Fort Wayne, with its garrison of more than fifty men, the commandant was the only man who had a pocket timepiece, and even that was unreliable. Most of the families preferred to rely on their own primitive methods of telling the hour, and I am afraid that, if the captain had been honest, he would have confessed he had more faith in such means than he had in the clumsy "bull's-eye," even though it came all the way from Switzerland. When the sun was shining, the housewife had the mark on the window-sill or floor by which she could regulate

her meals and duties, while others could do almost as well through noting the place of the sun in the heavens.

Auric Kingdon had two timepieces while tramping over the Fort Dearborn trail: the location of the sun overhead and his appetite. He waited until the orb of day was a little past meridian, and while doing so and pressing forward toward a little stream of cold water, which wound its way through the shady woods, he was on the alert for game. He had brought two slices of coarse dark bread, wrapped in paper and pushed into one of his pockets, but he carried nothing more in the way of food, since it would have been cumbersome, and he knew he could always shoot something.

He had noted the gray and black squirrels that were chirping and darting among the upper branches of the trees, sometimes coming near enough to be hit with a stone, provided a boy could throw straight, and he decided that one of these rodents should help make up his midday meal.

Halting in the path, he drew back the hammer of his rifle, and peered among the upper branches. He caught glimpses of several, and with his weapon half raised, glanced here and there before choosing his game. It required only a minute or so, when he suddenly brought his gun to his shoulder.

He had selected a large gray squirrel, which, after

chattering and peeping over the big, upper branch of an oak, scampered along its length toward the farther end, probably with the intention of making a flying leap to the limb of another tree.

It would have been a good shot for you or me to have sent a bullet through the body of the creature, and a much better one could we have struck the little animal in the head; but Auric Kingdon would have been disgusted with such an exploit. More than one western pioneer has chastised his boy for making it. Instead of aiming at the squirrel, Auric drove the bullet just beneath his body, so as to splinter the bark of the limb, which was hurled upward with such force that the concussion killed or stunned the rodent, and brought it tumbling through the leaves to the ground, where it was instantly pounced upon by Zinc and laid at his master's feet. This is called "barking" a squirrel, and prevents any breakage of the skin.

Auric did not forget the inflexible law of all hunters, which is to reload one's weapon after firing as quickly as it is possible to do so. He did not stir from where he had halted until he had poured the powder down the barrel, hammered it in place with his ramrod, shoved the bullet on top of that and filled the pan with powder, letting the hammer down again in place. Then, carrying the weapon in a trailing position, he walked to the little stream he had in mind, and

started a fire. This was easily done with the help of dry twigs and leaves and his flint and steel. Then he picked up the squirrel from where Zinc had again laid it at his feet. It was soon dressed and cleansed in the crystal brook, the waste portions being tossed to the greedy Zinc, who was always hungry, after which the sweet, juicy meat was skewered with green sticks and held over the blaze, where it was soon burned crisp and brown. Having blended the delicate meat with his light bread, and washed it down with cold water, Auric felt that he had made a meal fit for a king. He sat on the leafy ground, pushed out his sturdy legs in front of him, and with his back against a goodly sized sapling felt glad he was alive.

The youth had no desire for sleep, but with his perfect health and rugged strength, he luxuriated in the sensation of absolute rest. It was worth getting tired thus to enjoy the soothing thrill of repose of muscle and mind. Zinc, who, if tired, quickly recovered himself, was off again, darting among the trees, yelping and scurrying hither and thither, as if he never had had so much fun in all his life.

Auric was reclining in the posture named, with his gun across his legs above the knees, when he was startled by a sudden peculiarity in the cries of his dog. Instead of the spasmodic barking, which now and then broke the silence, he emitted a series of short, sharp yelps and howls, just as its species does,

if injured, as when being run over by a heavy vehicle which does not instantly kill it.

These outcries ceased as abruptly as they had begun. Wondering what they could mean, and fearing some mishap had befallen his dog, Auric rose to his feet, listened a moment, and then, placing his thumb and forefinger between his lips, emitted a whistle that could have been heard a mile away. It was the call which Zinc had never failed to obey. When therefore, it brought no response, and nothing could be heard of Zinc dashing through the forest, he was sure that something had gone amiss with him.

The direction whence the sounds had come showed that Zinc was either on the trail itself, or very close to it, the point being toward Fort Dearborn.

"It looks as if the poor fellow has made a mistake and attacked too big an animal," mused Auric, as he strode hurriedly over the path; "he ought to have had too much sense for that, and I never knew him do a thing of the kind before — helloa!"

In turning a moderate bend in the trail, Auric came upon the unfortunate Zinc. He lay on his side as dead as dead could be. Nor could there be any question as to the means that had brought his untimely end. He had been pierced by an Indian arrow just back of the forelegs, and since the flint was driven clean through the body, leaving the feathered end pointed toward the sky, the death of the poor beast

had been so sudden that he was given barely time for two or three frenzied yelps.

As the youth paused and looked down, his first shock was that of grief over the sudden death of Zinc. This emotion was quickly followed by flaming indignation.

"I wish I knew who did that!" he muttered, grasping his gun more firmly, and glancing in turn on all sides, in quest of the wretch who had done this wrong. Could he have caught sight of him and been assured of his guilt, Auric would have shot him down with no more hesitation than had been shown by him in the slaying of Zinc.

But, though the criminal could not have been far off, not a glimpse of him was obtained. The thought that probably he was crouching behind the trunk of one of the trees was exasperating beyond bearing. Auric looked not once, but several times. He even called out in the Winnebago tongue, though he could not know that the miscreant belonged to that tribe:

"The one who did that is worse than the cur he killed! He is a coward, who dares not show himself! If he is not a squaw, let him step forth and have it out with me!"

It cannot be known whether this challenge reached the ears for which it was intended. If it did, it was not accepted, for the skulking redskin remained invisible. Auric waited for a minute or two, and then

gazed at the body of his canine friend. It lay in the middle of the trail, with the shaft of the arrow pointing straight upward. Stooping, he firmly grasped the missile below the feathered butt. The head of flint, being barbed for the purpose of preventing withdrawal, did not yield and it was easy to lift the carcase. He carried it a few paces into the wood and gently laid it on the leaves.

"Good-by, Zinc," he said in a broken voice.

Returning to the trail, Auric resumed his journey toward the northwest, still saddened, but more angry than sorrowful because of the outrage. He was mystified that the Indian should remain satisfied with killing his dog: it would seem that he should seek the life of its owner. Perhaps he intended to do so.

You may be sure that while threading his course through the wilderness, Auric Kingdon did not forget this probability. He had learned a good deal of woodcraft, and he called into play all the knowledge at his command, glancing quickly and often toward every point of the compass, and holding himself ready to use his rifle the instant the need arose.

A little more than a mile from the spot where Zinc was slain the path made a gradual rise for two hundred yards or so. The section was comparatively free from undergrowth and the trees were scattered. Auric, therefore, had an unusually good view of the trail in advance. Believing the single Indian had pre-

ceded him, he studied the path as closely as he could. His suspicion was confirmed by his detection of what seemed to be the prints of moccasins that had recently passed that way. He might have been mistaken in his belief, but because of it he gave his chief attention to the front instead of the sides and rear.

Auric had just begun the ascent of the moderate elevation, when he saw the head and shoulders of an Indian warrior rising to view as he came up the opposite side of the slope. While this did not look as if the stranger was the one whom he was so eager to meet, the youth believed it was the same. If so, he had hurried forward for some distance, and then turned back, so as to make it appear that he was proceeding in the direction of Fort Wayne.

Our young friend slackened his pace, and walked slowly. Of course the Indian was equally quick in descrying him. He moved with a deliberate gait until on the crest of the elevation, when he halted, as if to wait where he was until the palefaced youth came up to him.

His dress and appearance showed Auric that he was a Winnebago, the most powerful tribe in the neighborhood. While nearly all of these warriors were provided with rifles and arms similar to those of the white men, a few clung to the ancient bow and arrow. The one who had come into view from somewhere was thus armed, and this fact made Auric quite sure he was the redskin who had slain the dog.

Seeing that he had paused, the youth did the same, and the two stood for several minutes looking at each other, one seemingly as unwilling to advance as was his friend or enemy, as the case might prove to be. It was the custom, when two persons of the respective races confronted each other, for one or both to make signs of good-will and resume their mutual approach.

The Winnebago made not the slightest move, but stood like a statue, his long bow grasped in his left hand, its length fully equal to his own stature, while he stared at the youth as if trying to solve to what species he belonged. The strained situation could not last, and Auric made a gesture with one of his hands as if beckoning the other to draw near. Instead of obeying or replying, he began rapidly adjusting an arrow to his bow.

"That's your game, is it?" muttered Auric; "it suits me better than anything else."

While speaking, he brought the stock of his gun to his shoulder and carefully sighted at the Indian, but the latter anticipated him. Drawing his arrow to a head, he held it in poise only for a second or two, when he let fly. The missile rose high in air, describing its graceful parabola, and, curving over, darted downward. As it struck the earth it buried its head in the ground for several inches, while the shaft and the feathered end trembled for a moment from the power of the impact.

But at no time was Auric Kingdon in danger. The distance was too great to be traversed by the arrow of the strongest bow, and the missile fell short by fully a hundred feet, but it was proof of the wonderful aim of the Winnebago that it struck in an exact line with the youth. Had the interval been less, he assuredly would have been hit unless alert enough to dodge the missile.

It was while the arrow was speeding high over head that Auric pressed the trigger. He took the best aim he could, and probably the bullet traversed more than the intervening distance, but it was too great for the best rifleman to cover with anything like accuracy, and the redskin was in no more danger of harm from the shot than was the youth himself from the arrow of the Winnebago.

CHAPTER III

WOODCRAFT

WHY the redskin launched his arrow at Auric Kingdon would be hard to explain, unless he meant the action as a notice of enmity. He must have known that the space separating them was too great to be covered by his primitive weapon, and was also aware that the flintlock rifle, although far more effective than the bow, was incapable of accurate aim for a similar distance.

Be that as it may, one trial on the part of the Winnebago satisfied him. Hardly had his arrow dived into the earth, when he whirled about and dashed down the slope, disappearing within the same minute that brought the firing of the gun by the youth.

It was a striking proof of the training of Auric Kingdon that, although eager to get within rifle shot of the miscreant, he held his place at the foot of the incline, until he had reloaded his gun and poured the powder into the pan. Then, carrying the weapon in a trailing position, he ran up the hill at his best speed and he was one of the fleetest of all who made their home at Fort Wayne.

Brief as was the time taken in the ascent, it failed of its purpose. Even before he reached the crown of the summit, he learned that his man had eluded him. A quick, searching glance in front failed to show a sign of him. He had used the slight interval to seek a hiding that was impenetrable.

Instead of hurrying down the hill, Auric stopped again to decide upon the best course to follow. The situation was one calling for the highest woodcraft. The trail once more entered the forest, with trees and undergrowth on both sides, in which a regiment of men might have concealed themselves with little trouble. His enemy was somewhere in those depths, watching his actions and awaiting the chance for a treacherous attempt against his life.

As matters stood, the advantage was wholly on the side of the Winnebago. If the youth passed down the path and pushed toward Fort Dearborn, he must expose himself to a stealthy shot from the bow, when the distance would make a fatal issue certain. Auric could not tell where his foe was hiding, while that foe would observe every movement made by him. It would therefore be inviting his own death to push on under the circumstances.

Instead of doing this, Auric faced the other way and moved down the slope at a rapid walk. He meant to give his enemy the impression that he had decided to return to Fort Wayne. If he succeeded

in the strategem, the Winnebago might be tempted to follow with the hope of gaining the opportunity that was slipping away from him.

The moment Auric was certain he had descended the slope far enough to be beyond sight of the warrior, he darted to one side of the trail, and, going a few yards, took position behind the trunk of an ash several feet in diameter. Standing thus, he softly raised the hammer of his rifle and bided his time.

"Now, my dusky friend, if you will give me the same chance I gave you when you shot poor Zinc, I'll be obliged."

But if the Winnebago had let slip one golden opportunity, he was no fool. He knew too much to walk into the trap set for him. He must have suspected the ruse of the youth, for the wearisome minutes wore on and the eyes that were scanning the summit of the elevation saw nothing of the painted face and feathers. The time came when Auric was compelled to admit that his trick had miscarried.

"Now, if he only knew where *I* am standing," he reflected, "he might be able to turn the tables on me."

The young woodman gave another proof of his skill in seeing the possibility of such a result and in guarding against it. Thus, if the warrior could learn on which side of the trail his foe was waiting for him, it would be easy to make a long circuit and steal upon the youth from the rear. While there seemed to be

no means by which he could gain such knowledge, Auric asked himself:

"Suppose he makes a guess and hits it the first time; or suppose he sneaks up from the other side, and, failing to find me, learns that I am somewhere on *this* side."

It was a most uncomforting theory, and, when an hour had passed without bringing sight or sound of the Winnebago, and the frequent glances which the lad cast behind him failed to give him any knowledge, he became morally certain that the very strategy he feared, was on foot. Thus it came about that he gave as much attention to the woods behind him as those in front.

Still another hour passed equally fruitless of results, when Auric decided to tarry no longer. He had already lost so much time that he would have to use haste for a part of the distance in order to reach the meeting-place in time, though, if he should be somewhat late, it would make no real difference.

"If he is prowling among the trees I shall be as able to catch sight of him as he will of me, provided I don't walk straight up to him before I find out where he is hiding."

To avert this danger, Auric, instead of taking a course at right angles to the path, turned sharply to the southeast. If his enemy were really trying to steal upon him from the rear, this course would allow the

youth to flank him, and either come upon him from behind or pass him altogether. His intention was to return to the trail at a point so far beyond where he had left it, that he could feel certain of being between the Winnebago and Fort Dearborn.

The plan was carried out without hindrance. Auric continued picking his way to the eastward until he was nearly a mile from the path, when he turned again so that his course became almost parallel to it. He decided, after keeping this up for some time and observing that the afternoon was far along, that he would not re-enter the trail until the morrow. By that time he would be so well clear of the prowling warrior that he need give him no further thought.

The occurrence made the youth thoughtful. It was known at Fort Wayne that there had been an outbreak of the Indians near Fort Dearborn in the previous April, during which a family was killed a short distance from the fort, but the prompt display of force by the garrison had awed the hostiles, since which time, so far as Auric knew, there had been no trouble.

He could not believe there was any danger of a general uprising of the redskins, though the declaration of war might hasten such a calamity. He looked upon the encounter with the Winnebago as an incident by itself. With the natural inclination to evil which belonged to that race, this vagrant could not

withstand the temptation to slay the dog and to seek the death of its master. His tribe had nothing to do with the matter, and once clear of all peril from him, Auric believed or rather tried to believe he would have no more trouble. In reaching this conclusion, he was influenced very much by his naturally buoyant spirits and hopeful disposition.

When the sun was in the horizon, he decided to advance no farther, but to encamp where he was, starting at an early hour the next morning. He was among the trees, where the undergrowth was dense, and had little fear of discovery. Possibly the Winnebago might try to follow his trail, but that would be hard work for him. Knowing that the youth would be on the guard against it, the Indian would have to place himself in much danger from the rifle that the lad carried ready at all times for instant use. Although he often glanced to the rear pausing and listening, he did not discover the slightest cause for misgiving, and finally dismissed it from his mind.

The place where Auric Kingdon halted was beside a small stream that was nothing more than a brook. The water was cool and clear, and the slightly sloping bank, with its blanket of leaves, made the best couch he could ask for. He might have shot some kind of game, had he hunted for it, but he chose not to do so. He had learned long before that, despite his vigorous appetite, it was often wise for him to

disregard his hunger. The midday meal of bread and broiled squirrel was sufficient for twenty-four hours. In order to secure food, he would have to fire his rifle, and afterward start a fire. In the circumstances, it was dangerous to do either. The report of the gun would be likely to draw enemies to the spot, and the smoke and gleam of the fire would be the best kind of beacon for any redskins seeking his life.

The heat of the camp-fire would have been unpleasant during the day, which had been hot and sultry. A natural coolness followed with the coming of night, but, though the youth was without any blanket or extra covering, he had no need of anything of that nature. He was strong, rugged, and tired, and closing his eyes, while the gloom was stealing through the wood, he did not open them again until the gray of early morning proclaimed a new day.

Auric bathed his face and hands in the cool brook, drank deeply from it, and, after the prayer which he never forgot when lying down or rising, he rested his rifle over his shoulder, leaped lightly across the streamlet, and resumed his journey to Fort Dearborn.

"I have lost two or three hours," he reflected, as he bore to the left, "but it won't make much difference. I have a couple of days in which to make up the loss, and if I do keep Jethro waiting, it won't hurt him. Gracious alive! but ain't I hungry?"

When a little while later he heard the gobbling of turkeys, he felt that the chance was too good to throw away. Stealing softly among the trees to the right, he quickly came upon one of the favorite roosting places of the birds. With the coming of darkness, hundreds gathered at a natural clearing of several acres in extent, on the farther side of which were a half dozen spreading beeches, in whose branches the turkeys spent the night, scattering in the morning to hunt for food, and returning again to their sleeping quarters with the coming of darkness. Like all such creatures they lived up to the maxim of "early to bed and early to rise," and, although the sun was hardly above the horizon, most of them had already dispersed for the day.

Nothing in the world could have been easier than for the young hunter to bring down a plump, half-grown hen. The crack of the rifle and the vanishment of the head of the victim were so instant that the other fowls did not understand it, and merely looked around without any fear; but when the youth strode from behind the oak that had shielded him while aiming, they scattered in a panic.

Times without number he had provided himself with meals in this way, and it did not take him long to dress the bird and broil all that he could eat. That being done, he rose to his feet with a sigh of content.

"That will serve for the rest of the day, and maybe

longer than that; it won't do for me to loaf until I get farther along the trail."

That his calculations were right was proved within the following half hour, when he came back to the trail at the spot which he had fixed in his mind. With his strong memory of places and his woodcraft, he had not gone astray for so much as a rod. He knew as well where he was as if on the parade ground at Fort Wayne or in the house of Mr. Kinzie at Fort Dearborn.

Auric stood for some minutes glancing up and down the clearly marked path. He did not catch a glimpse of a living thing, and the forest was still. But he did not need to be told that the great wilderness, stretching in every direction, was seething with animal life, and that thousands of vengeful red men were roaming to and fro in their depths, eager for a chance to wreak their hatred upon the palefaces who had come across the vast water and stolen their hunting grounds from them.

It is said that every one can become accustomed to any kind of peril, and it was with no misgiving that Auric struck off to the northwest, with his long, sweeping stride, which he could maintain hour after hour without fatigue. He was glad to observe that the sky was overcast. The air was close and oppressive, and he would have been much more uncomfortable had he been exposed to the burning rays of the

sun, for in many places, the trail led across plains where there was no protection from the scorching rays.

Auric held to his sturdy gait for several hours, and was sure he had regained most of the distance lost the day before. His frequent glances to the rear and among the trees on his right and left revealed nothing to cause alarm. He had long given over all thought of the vagrant who shot his dog, and was making his way through a stretch of wood, where the undergrowth was more abundant than usual, when he received a second shock.

Without the slightest warning, a mounted Indian warrior rode into view from the opposite direction. His pony was small and dark of color, without saddle and with only a twisted piece of deer hide looped about his nose for a bridle. Four other warriors, similarly mounted, came into sight, as their leader slowed his pace and brought his animal to a halt within a few paces of where Auric had stepped aside from the trail, and waited for them to pass.

The significant fact about this party of redskins was that all were in their war paint. Their faces were daubed with lines and circles and splotches that intensified their ugliness. One not accustomed to such sights would have been terrified by the picture, for each Indian looked as if he were wearing a hideous false face, with little or no resemblance to the human countenance.

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The instant Auric caught sight of the first warrior, he recognized him. This was not in spite of his painted visage but because of it. One of his fancies, even when he did not proclaim himself upon the war path, was to mark three small circles in white paint on his low, broad forehead. Within each circle he made several dabs in yellow. Thus the two colors had a coppery background and stood out in such relief that they caught the eye as soon as one saw the Indian himself.

It was because of what has just been told that Auric Kingdon recognized the leader of the five as a Winnebago chief, known among the whites as Big Wolf. He occasionally visited Fort Wayne and Dearborn, and was not a favorite at either place. He was sullen, and many believed he was treacherous. Now and then a scout or hunter who left one of the posts and went into the woods never came out again. Perhaps months afterward some of his friends would come upon the skeleton and tattered rags in the depth of the wilderness, with the tell-tale marks that showed he had not only been shot down, but had been barbarously scalped by his enemy.

Precisely why such crimes were laid to Big Wolf would be hard to explain. But such was the fact in almost every instance, though no real proof was brought forward. Probably it was due to his sour disposition.

Auric Kingdon had always treated Big Wolf well, but he did that with every Indian who did not insist upon being an enemy. The youth, however, shared the distrust of his friends regarding the sullen redskin, and never sought his special friendship, as he did in the case of Black Partridge and other sachems and warriors.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE SHORE

EVERY one of the Winnebagoes held a rifle across his thighs as he sat his pony. In addition, the handle of a knife and of a tomahawk showed in the girdle about his waist. All were fully armed and ready for whatever might come.

If Auric Kingdon felt a little quicker beating of the heart, when he faced this motley company, he did not show it by look or manner. Having made room for the horsemen to pass without turning aside, he looked up in the repellent countenance of Big Wolf, as he checked his animal, and made him a military salute. He was excusable for then using the insincere terms common on such occasions.

"I am glad to meet my brother, Big Wolf and his warriors."

The words were spoken in the tongue of the Indian, and you will bear in mind that that which follows is a liberal translation of the sentences uttered by each. The sachem made no returning salute, but asked in a gruff, sullen voice:

"Where is the paleface going that he is alone in the woods?"

"I am on my way to Fort Dearborn."

"Why does my brother go there?"

Auric would have been glad to reply that it was no business of the Winnebago why he chose to go there or anywhere else, but such answer would have been the height of unwisdom.

"Big Wolf has seen my friend at Fort Wayne when he came to visit me; I go to Fort Dearborn to make *him* a visit."

While the situation which immediately followed may have had no special meaning, it was trying to the last degree to Auric. You will remember that the five horsemen were sitting motionless on their animals, who stood in Indian file, one directly behind the other. The four warriors had not spoken a word, but each pair of black, piercing eyes was bent upon the youth, standing at the side of the trail and looking up at the leader, with now and then a flitting glance at his companions. Big Wolf, instead of immediately speaking to the last remark of the youth, sat as motionless as one of the tree trunks at the side of the trail. While doing so, he looked fixedly into the handsome face of the lad. Picture, if you can, the high cheek-bones, the broad mouth, the low forehead, with the coarse black hair dangling about the brawny shoulders, and, above all, the horrible daubs of different colored

paint spread over the ugly features, and you will have a good idea of the redskin who confronted the youth.

So long as the two kept up a conversation there was nothing specially disagreeable in the situation of our young friend; but when Big Wolf stopped speaking, and, sitting like an equestrian statue, kept his glittering eyes centred on the countenance of the youth, the latter's nerves were put on edge.

Of what was the sachem thinking? What was his purpose in subjecting Auric to such an ordeal? Was he asking himself what he should do with this paleface who was completely in his power? Was he playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse before crunching it in her jaws? Would he suddenly break forth like a volcano in his consuming wrath?

With all his coolness, courage and nerve, Auric knew he could not stand the tension much longer. He looked into the frightful visage, and felt as he imagined a person feels when fascinated by the glitter of the coiled rattlesnake close to his face.

But Auric was not "charmed" in the slightest degree; he was simply puzzled by the question as to the best means of ending an intolerable situation. He suspected that the chief was testing him, and to fail to return his burning gaze would be a confession of defeat. With a cleverness that would have done credit to a veteran, Auric removed his cap, took the small handkerchief from where he carried it in the

crown, and deliberately mopped his moist forehead. This made it appropriate to look at the piece of limp linen, after passing it over his crimsoned features. Tossing it back in the cap, he held the latter so as to use it as a fan — and it was a poor enough one — and, glancing up at Big Wolf and then into the faces of his warriors, he said with a smile:

"Whew! but it's warm! It is harder for me to walk than for you to ride; I suppose my brothers are going to Fort Wayne?"

This lifted the tenseness of the situation. Big Wolf ceased his burning stare and said, still in his sullen voice:

"My brother should go with us to his own home."

"Not until after I have visited my friends, and our hearts have been made glad by sight of each other; tell them at Fort Wayne you met me on the road, but we had not time to talk much together."

And then what did Auric Kingdon do but make another military salute, return his cap to its place on his crown, step aside a little farther, and resume his walk toward Fort Dearborn. The act signified that he had not the leisure to continue the interview, no matter how pleasant he found it to be. It was a piece of daring, but the youth had seized the psychological moment and turned it to the best account.

Brave men who have been through the ordeal say that the most nerve-wrenching situation in which

one can be placed is that of turning his back on an enemy, and, while expecting to be fired upon at any moment, show not the slightest fear of such an occurrence. A famous naval officer tells of landing upon a beach, and walking a number of rods, with his back to the foe and confident every instant of being shot. The temptation to drop all dignity and break into a headlong run, with grotesque dodgings from side to side, is almost irresistible. Few indeed are able to withstand the longing to make frantic efforts after safety.

Auric kept at the side of the trail until several paces beyond the last horseman, when he stepped back into the path, and continued his walk in the opposite direction to that which the Winnebagoes were following. Had he broken into a run, or dashed among the trees and scurried away, it would have been proof of his terror, and invited the consequences he was so anxious to escape. Brief as was the time, it seemed hours. Only by a terrific effort of his will could he master himself. He shut his lips, held his breath, and walked as he was walking before he saw Big Wolf and his warriors. The perspiration that covered his body was cold; a strange, crinkling thrill ran up and down his spine, and made his eyes flicker, as he expected each instant to hear the sharp crack of one or more of the Indian rifles, and to feel the fatal electric pang in head or body, for the moment before gasping out his life.

Why did they not fire? Why did not Big Wolf shout, commanding him to return or to stand still? Why did they not ride him down and end his misery?

Step followed step until he had traversed fifty yards, and still not a sound came from the danger point behind him. Hope began to grow, and with it was mingled wonder, for he could not explain the action, or rather inaction, of Big Wolf and his little company.

Suddenly Auric's temptation took a new form: he felt that he *must* look around. Surely there could be nothing in such action to tempt the red men. If they were gazing at him he would gaily salute and resume his dignified walk. Unlike his former longing, this one overmastered him. Without checking his gait he turned his head and peered over his shoulder at the point where he had met the little war party.

The redskins had resumed their journey, and were out of sight.

Auric shivered, and for the moment was faint because of the reaction from the intensity of fear to the assurance of safety.

"I don't understand it, and I don't believe I ever shall understand it," he whispered, walking unsteadily for a few minutes. Then an odd doubt began coming to him. He looked back again and again; he would take a few steps and then turn his head; after a time, unable to shake off his distrust, he halted, faced about, and stared over the trail for several seconds, during

which he held his breath and gazed with unshakable steadiness.

"What's the use?" he asked himself with a nervous laugh; "if they were there I should see them; I've looked and looked again and they are *not* there. Heavens! I know what it means!"

He broke into a run, and dashed over the trail at his highest speed, without halt or check, until he had sped a half mile and was panting from the labor. Then he stopped as abruptly as he had started.

"I'm the biggest fool in the Territory! What put such a notion in my head?"

The fancy that had thrown him into a panic was that the five horsemen had turned their animals into the woods at the side of the trail, and were riding at full speed toward Fort Dearborn, with the purpose of cutting him off, and either making him a prisoner or putting him to the torture. It was not until he had run the distance named that the idiocy of the whole thing broke upon him.

It was impossible in the first place for any horse to force his way through the forest on either side of the trail. While there were a few open spaces, most of it was so close as to be impassable for ponies like those ridden by the Winnebagoes. Then why should they take to the woods when they could overhaul him far better by keeping to the trail, and why, if they had

anything of the kind in mind, had they allowed him to walk away as he had done?

The excuse for such wild whims was the mental strain to which the youth had been subjected. When he had time to regain something of self-control he could afford to laugh at his fancies. None the less he was not clear as to the explanation of the actions of Big Wolf. When he gained a chance to talk with those who were older and better versed in the ways of red men, Auric was told that the sullen Winnebago had been restrained simply by fear from doing him harm. It was known that the chief had left Fort Dearborn a couple of days before, and that he must have met Auric Kingdon on the road. Thus the probability of the crime of murder being brought home to him alone prevented the sachem from committing it.

Although Auric was inexpressibly relieved, when an hour had passed, during which he continued pushing toward the northwest without sight or sign of Big Wolf and his warriors, he could not wholly free himself from misgiving that they had some scheme in mind whose nature was unsuspected by him. He held himself ready to dart into the protection of the wood at the first glimpse of them, no matter how far to the rear, and he kept a brisk pace throughout most of the day, halting only long enough to drink from the brooks which he crossed. He had ferried himself over the Wabash by means of a raft, and in the course

of his journey had to do the same with other streams of considerable size.

The cloudiness, observed earlier in the day, increased, and when the afternoon was half gone a smart sprinkling of rain fell. He gave no heed to it, for the coolness was agreeable and he did not check his progress until night began closing in. He had covered a good many miles, and was not only hungry but very tired. None the less he would have kept going for hours after the close of day, but for the darkness. The clouds shut out the moon and star gleam, and he was not familiar enough with the trail to make much use of it except when the sun was shining. So he hunted out the best place he could find in the gloom — and any spot was good enough to serve him — and, lying down a short distance from the path, he slept without disturbance until daylight.

On this day he did not see a single Indian, but the smoke of a camp-fire far to the north reminded him that others beside himself were abroad, and he was ever on the alert. Thus pushing on, always vigilant, ever hopeful, and prepared as well as he could be for anything that might confront him, he saw from familiar signs on the fourth day that he was near Lake Michigan. When he listened he heard the solemn murmur of the waves of the inland sea, and his heart glowed at the thought that in a short time

he and Jethro Judd would be paddling northward over its surface toward Fort Dearborn.

Despite his efforts, he saw from the landmarks that he was two or three hours behind time. It was always understood by him and his friend that they should come together very near noon, on the days appointed for their meeting. Judd had to spend one night on the way thither, and he could readily paddle the remaining distance on the forenoon of the second day. As has been shown, it was equally easy for Auric to time his progress, and, but for the interruptions of which we have learned, would have reached the spot as soon as his comrade. On one occasion they hit it so closely that as Auric emerged from the woods, Jethro was running the nose of his boat up the shingle. In the instance immediately before the present, the interval between their respective arrivals was less than half an hour.

"I know he'll be mad," chuckled Auric, as he unconsciously hastened his footsteps, "but father has told me many times that we should never find fault with another for not keeping an engagement or promise until we have heard his explanation. If Jet tries to scold me, I'll fling *that* at him."

A few minutes later, our young friend came out of the forest at the point that was so familiar to him, and with a swelling heart gazed off over the immense body of water stretching to the north far beyond the utmost

reach of his vision. The first sight of the lake always impressed him. He loved to stand on the beach, with the cool wind fanning his face, to watch the tumbling waves at his feet, and to trace as far as his keen eyes were able to trace the wooded shores to the right and left until they faded from sight in the dim distance. When he had enjoyed this for a time, he gazed off over the inland sea, sometimes watching the white caps when the wind was brisk, and admiring the crystalline clearness of the water, which, because of its freshness, is subject to quicker and more violent disturbances than the ocean. With his active imagination he pictured the first sight by white men of this magnificent chain of lakes, of wonderful Niagara, and the terrific outbursts of wrath which sometimes take place on the waters.

But just now Auric did not feel in a romantic mood. He was hungrier than he had been at any time since leaving Fort Wayne. It was the custom of Jethro to bring a generous supply of delicacies, in the form of cake and broiled chicken or venison, and our young friend was thinking more of them than of the beauties of nature around him. After he had satisfied his hunger he would probably feel more poetical.

It did not take Auric long to make a most displeasing discovery: his friend had not arrived, and a careful scanning of all the visible portion of the lake failed to show anything resembling a canoe. Jethro always

drew his boat up the beach at a certain point. Failing to see the dainty craft there, Auric made an extended search along shore in both directions. At intervals he emitted his resounding whistle, but the listening ears caught no response.

"That's mighty queer," exclaimed the disgusted youth, when all doubt as to his friend's non-arrival had vanished; "I consider it a mean piece of business on his part; *I* never served him such a trick, and he has no right to play it on me."

CHAPTER V

COMRADES

THUS Auric Kingdon violated the adage he had called to mind as the proper one to govern a person in his circumstances. His comrade had not met him as expected, and he blamed him therefor, not waiting to think that such a slip would not have occurred without good cause.

We must remember, however, that there was some palliation for his impatience. He was tired and hungry, having counted upon the food he knew would be brought by his friend. Few youngsters thus placed would not have felt out of sorts. From where he stood on the margin of the lake he would be able to see the canoe of Jethro Judd while it was still so far off that it would take an hour of vigorous paddling to bring him to the meeting-place.

Standing thus with his gaze roving over the immense sheet of water he began to think of his injustice toward his friend. Surely he would not fail to be on hand unless there was good reason for such failure.

"Jet never did anything of the kind before, and, though I can't understand why he did it now, I must

wait to hear what he has to say. Suppose he *never* comes!"

Auric shuddered at the thought thus presented. He called to mind the unrest among the Indians of the section. He had just passed through a disquieting experience, and it might be that Jethro had been still more unfortunate. A single person in making his way through the disturbed country must be in more danger than if he had companions. The redskins were treacherous by nature, and the temptation to do evil was one that few of their race could withstand.

Suddenly a thrill passed through the youth, for while gazing to the northward, he observed a tiny, dark object on the water. It was several miles away, and partly hidden by the tossing waves, for a smart breeze was blowing. He knew on the instant that it was a canoe, and in his mind there was no doubt that it was his tardy comrade, making haste to come to him. In the pleasant revulsion of feeling, Auric took off his cap and swung it over his head.

"Hurrah! I can afford to forgive him, for I don't know what kept him back; I wish I had brought father's glass with me, so I could see more clearly."

Shading his eyes with one hand, he peered through the sunlight. Yes; it was a canoe speeding toward him, and in due time the two friends would clasp hands. It was following the course of the shore from which

it held a distance of a hundred yards or more. It dipped and rose to the motion of the small waves, but the flash of the water was seen as the ashen blade was swung first on one side and then on the other of the craft. Each of the boys was an adept in handling a boat, which sped fast and true toward the one who was waiting on the beach, so near the lake that the tumbling waves came almost to his feet.

"Well, I declare!"

The excited exclamation was caused by the startling discovery that more than one man was in the canoe. A single person was paddling, but behind him sat two others; moreover, all three were Indians.

For the first time a pang of fear for the safety of his friend shot through Auric Kingdon. He gave the most sinister meaning to the sight.

"They have killed Jet and taken his boat!"

Fortunately, our young friend had time in which to collect his wits. The canoe could not arrive for a considerable while, during which he must decide upon his own course. Could he have felt assured that the frightful theory he had uttered was the true one, he would have held his place on the beach, and, as soon as the party came within fair range, opened fire on them. He was sure of shooting one warrior at least, and their position in the craft headed toward him favored doing still further execution. He cared naught for his own exposed situation, for he would

have time in which to reload his weapon. His rage over the supposed crime took away his cool judgment for a few minutes, but he soon regained command of himself.

No doubt the red men had descried him before he observed the canoe, and after a part of the distance was passed, they headed as straight as an arrow for him. Was it wise to hold his position until they stepped ashore? Clearly not, for if they were ill-disposed he would place himself in their power.

Not wishing to appear frightened, Auric turned and walked slowly up the shingle toward the wood which was near at hand. As he did this he reflected that the Indians were almost within gunshot, and he had that uncomfortable feeling of which I have spoken, when one expects to hear the sharp crack of a rifle, and feel the twinge of the bullet of his enemy. But he maintained his dignity and passed among the tree trunks as if he were taking an ordinary stroll. The instant, however, the youth knew he was beyond sight, he turned sharply to the left and broke into a brisk lope, not pausing till he had gone a number of rods. While doing so he often glanced toward the lake. He could see nothing of it, though the tumbling of the waves was distinct. Turning again, he cautiously made his way through the undergrowth until, by parting the foliage in front of his face, he gained sight of the three redskins.

By this time they were near the beach. All were strangers, but he recognized them as Winnebagoes. They were in war paint and fully armed. At the first glance, Auric fancied he had seen at Fort Dearborn the one who was swaying the paddle, but he was doubtful, and it was of little difference either way. Suddenly this fellow made several powerful sweeps with the blade, the front of the canoe shot well up the shingle, and all stepped nimbly out. The warrior who laid down his paddle drew the boat still farther, to prevent its being washed away, and then the three stood close together and talked for a few minutes. The painted faces of two were turned toward the edge of the wood, and Auric was sure he had never seen such repellent countenances. They had landed so near the spot where he formerly stood, that they must have seen the imprints of his shoes. One of them pointed down at the sand. Then the eyes of all three followed the tracks up to the edge of the forest. Evidently they were talking about him, and when the Winnebagoes walked slowly up the slope, Auric felt little doubt of their intention.

"They are going to trail me! I must make a fight or run!"

He quickly decided to hold his ground for the time. It might be, after all, that they were little interested in him. Anyway, it would be better to wait until he could learn more of their intentions.

After the three entered the wood, the intervening foliage hid them from sight of Auric, but he relied upon his keen hearing to detect their approach. He shifted his position so as to be shielded from discovery and intently listened. In the course of a few minutes, he fancied he heard the rustling of leaves or the moving of foliage, but after a time, when it had not been repeated, he began to believe he was mistaken. Fifteen minutes later he felt no doubt on that point.

This being so, it was equally certain that the Winnebagoes were not trailing him. If their feeling was hostile, it was not malignant enough to lead them to any special effort to do him harm. Evidently they had left the spot and were now at a considerable distance from it. The natural inference was that they had come from the direction of Fort Dearborn and were on their way to Fort Wayne.

Reasonable as was this theory, Auric Kingdon was too well trained in woodcraft to discount it. The redskins might have counted on his return and were in hiding ready to pounce upon him, whenever he came within reach. He therefore held his place for a half hour more, when, having seen and heard nothing of them, he stealthily picked his course along the edge of the wood, keeping just within cover, until near the spot where the Winnebagoes had entered the forest. With the exception of the booming of the lake, everything was as still as the grave.

"They have gone," was the decision of the youth, who now turned his attention to the canoe, lying with its nose up the shore, a few yards distant. Naturally, he was anxious to learn whether it was the one in which he and Jethro Judd had paddled many times along the shore of the lake. With a relief that can hardly be imagined he found he had never seen the craft before. He was so familiar with the other, that he could make no mistake regarding it. Had it been the canoe of his friend, all doubt of his fate would have vanished.

"Thank heaven!" was the fervent exclamation of Auric; "it looks as if no harm had come to Jet after all — Well, I'll be shot!"

In the intensity of his interest in the Winnebagoes, the youth had given no attention to anything else. He did not look out over the lake, except merely to glance at it, but waited to make certain his enemies had gone. He had stepped out from the wood and was scrutinizing the canoe only a few paces away, when through the stillness he heard a faint, "*Halloo!*" Raising his eyes he gazed off over the water and saw the missing comrade, hardly a hundred yards distant, speeding swiftly toward him. He did not pause in his paddling, when he uttered the shout, but came straight on, driving his canoe up the beach so close beside the other that the two almost grazed. Leaping out, he clasped the hand of Auric, who with his face aglow, demanded:

"What made you so late, Jet?"

"Late! why I'm away ahead of time."

"Ahead of time!" repeated the other in astonishment; "what do you mean by such stuff as that?"

"Isn't this the eighth of August?"

"Of course it is; what of that?"

"I was to meet you here on the ninth of the month, but I was so impatient that I thought I would come a day ahead of time and follow the trail till I met you. It gets very tiresome at the fort."

Auric laughed in his hearty fashion.

"Our engagement was for the eighth; haven't you my letter accepting that date which you named when you wrote to me?"

"I think I have," replied Jethro, beginning a vigorous search of his pockets; "strange that you should make such a blunder; I'll soon show you I'm right."

"And I believe I have your letter," added Auric, commencing also to hunt through the inner pockets of his coat; "yes, here it is; now let's see who is the blunderer."

They brought out the missives at the same moment, two folded pieces of blue foolscap, on which the words were pencilled. Jethro was first in unfolding his slip.

"Listen," he said, with glowing face:

"'My dear Auric: Don't fail to be at the foot of the lake on the morning of Wednesday' — Well, I'll

be hanged!" he exclaimed with lengthened visage, "Who would have thought *that?*"

Auric laughed more heartily than before.

"Oh, no! Of course, *you* never make a mistake; you know you never did. Suppose you hear what you wrote me."

And he read:

"'If I'm alive, I'll be at the spot on — '"

And then Auric paused in dismay. He had leaned his rifle against the front of the canoe, so as to leave his hands free. With one he shoved back his cap and scratched his head.

"Jet, did you ever know anything of the kind? *We're both wrong.*"

They now compared notes.

In the one written by Jethro he had named Wednesday, August 10, as the day for the meeting. In spite of the fact that the date was clearly set forth, the writer was fixed in the belief that it was Tuesday the ninth, while Auric Kingdon was just as certain it was Monday the eighth of the month. Since neither had ever gone astray in an understanding of this nature, who shall explain how it was that both blundered in the present instance? Strange things happen in this life, and neither of the youths was ever able to understand how the double mistake came to be made. Each had taken a different date, and neither was right. Jethro sat down on the front of his canoe, and looked

up smilingly in the face of his comrade, who scratched his head again and re-read his letter, and then took Jethro's out of his hand and compared the two.

It was as I have said, and they remained mystified. Suddenly Auric peered over the shoulder of his friend into the craft beyond.

"I see a package of something at the stern; suppose I investigate."

"I think that before you begin eating we ought to consider this canoe, which I saw ahead of me with the three Winnebagoes in it."

"I can eat and talk at the same time; *they* can wait awhile, but *I* can't."

He drew the boat sideways against the shingle, so as to reach within and lift out the food which was enclosed in clean, spotless linen, and impatiently opened it.

Jethro amusedly watched his friend.

"There's enough for three or four men, but I don't know whether there's enough for *you*."

"I don't either, but I'll soon find out. Jingo! but Mrs. Kinzie is a jewel!" exclaimed Auric, as he attacked the spongy, dark bread, the tender, well-cooked venison, and the soft hunks of delicious gingerbread.

"I don't suppose you want any, Jet," remarked Auric, as best he could with his mouth stuffed to repletion.

"It doesn't look as if I have much chance of getting it if I did."

"I'll divide, or let you have what I leave."

"With mighty small chance of your leaving anything. No, Auric, I know something of that appetite of yours, and I ate enough to last me till night, and, if worst comes to worst, I can hold out till we get back to Fort Dearborn; *you're* safe for a week."

Auric tried to make reply, but the organs of speech were too much smothered at the moment. When he could mumble he said:

"A fellow must use his chance when he gets it; if I hadn't caught sight of you, or you hadn't called me when you did, I must have had to go on a hunt through the woods; if you meant to start a day ahead of what you thought the time was, why didn't you make it a full day?"

"I should have had to walk further along the trail to meet you; there was danger, too, of my missing you in the night; I didn't mean to go too far."

As Auric filled up he became more generous. He pressed his friend to eat, and, though Jethro did not feel the need, he joined him in a moderate fashion. The result was that when Auric expressed himself satisfied, enough remained to serve them for a lunch at the close of day. Jethro sighed with relief, for he declared he had no thought that more than a few crumbs would be left.

CHAPTER VI

AN EXCHANGE OF SHOTS

Auric hurriedly told his experience with the three Winnebagoes who landed from the canoe at this point.

"I don't think we ought to stay here another minute," said Jethro; "get in and I'll paddle off to a safe distance; they are liable to come back any minute, and it will be better for us to be somewhere else when they do."

This was the voice of prudence and Auric assented. The next moment the birchen craft was shoved clear, and the young man plied the paddle with a vigor that rapidly carried it out on the lake. While doing so he necessarily faced the way the boat was going, but Auric placed himself at the bow, so as to look back over the course. Jethro headed northward, but kept well off shore. When a considerable space had been passed he slackened his strokes and wrought more leisurely.

"You folks won't have any trouble at Fort Wayne," he said, "but things are beginning to look bad at Dearborn."

"Why?"

"You know the Indians have been expecting the declaration of war for months, and have made up their minds to fight on the side of the British. Dearborn is so much exposed that General Hull has sent orders from Detroit for Captain Heald to abandon it. Mr. Kinzie and every one else says it is the worst thing that can be done."

"I have heard them say at home that orders have been forwarded to all the posts not to give them up without a strong fight. Why doesn't Captain Heald fall back on that and refuse to leave?"

"He thinks the same as the other officers, but he is a great stickler for discipline. General Hull is his superior officer, and when he sends him positive orders, he dare not disobey them.

"How did the despatches reach him?"

"They were brought yesterday by a Pottawatomie runner. After Captain Heald had read them, the Pottawatomie took him aside and told him he knew what the orders were. He was a very intelligent man and urged Captain Heald not to obey the command."

"For what reason?"

"There must be five or six hundred Indians gathered near the fort and they can't be trusted. The garrison is fifty-odd; when they march out they will be at the mercy of these redskins, to say nothing of the women and children; while, if they stay in the fort, they can hold it against any number brought against it."

"What answer did Captain Heald give the messenger?"

"He thanked him and said his advice was good; he said further that he would do as the runner and his own officers advised, but for the fact that the orders from General Hull were positive: he must obey them. Then the Pottawatomie begged that the garrison should leave at once, before the Indians learned of the despatch. Our folks would thus gain a start that would be of the greatest help."

"What did Captain Heald reply to *that* advice?"

"He refused, even though all his officers favored."

Auric's face clouded.

"I know the officers are dissatisfied; I have heard whispers of their refusing to obey their commander, but I suppose they will hardly dare go that far."

"No; but I tell you, Auric, things are dark at Dearborn. If I had thought anything of the kind was coming I never should have made this appointment with you."

"I don't understand why it should have affected *that*."

"There's no saying when the trouble will come, and they will need every one who knows how to fire a gun."

"Then they will be glad to have *me*," said Auric, with flashing eye; "I'm glad I shall be on hand; father will be glad, too, and sorry that he and others can't

help. But you haven't told me about these three Winnebagoes that set off toward Fort Wayne."

"I know little more than you; I camped eight or ten miles up the lake on the same spot where I have spent the night many times, and saw nothing of them, though I believe they came from near Fort Dearborn. I hadn't paddled far this morning, when, pushing out a little farther from shore, as I passed a curve in the bank, I saw the canoe ahead of me with the Winnebagoes all facing front."

"Did they get sight of you?"

"No, for I put into shore again, before any of them turned their heads. At any other time I should have been glad to hasten on and join them, but I was afraid to do so then. Did you notice whether they were in their war paint?"

"They were, and I never saw a more villainous lot; why didn't they make a hunt through the wood for me? They wouldn't have had far to go."

"They didn't think you were worth it; they have something important on foot, though I can't guess what it is."

"They seem to be travelling toward Fort Wayne."

"Yes, but may not go anywhere near it."

"Where then can they be heading?"

"A good many miles lie between here and Fort Wayne; I don't see that there is any use of trying to guess; they are out of the question for the present."

"I rather think not," Auric hastened to say; "yonder they come!"

Jethro turned his head and saw the meaning of his friend's words. The three Winnebagoes had just emerged from the wood, and were walking down the beach to where they had left their canoe some time before. They had probably observed the boat containing the boys before the latter saw them. Shoving the craft from land, the three seated themselves in it, and the same warrior who had swung the paddle before took it up and glided out into the lake.

"It looks as if they meant to give us a chase," said Auric.

"I don't think they will," coolly replied his comrade.

"How can you know that?"

"Because, if they try it, we won't run. What would be the use? They can outpaddle us, even if they have a bigger load to carry."

Auric liked to hear his friend speak thus. It galled him to recall that he had been compelled to dodge redskins more than once since leaving home, and the memory of the dog slain by the vagrant redskin still rankled.

"We won't let them come too close; keep using the paddle, Jet, and I'll be on the lookout."

It was not yet certain that the warriors were pursuing the boys, for, naturally they would take the same

direction if they were returning to Fort Dearborn. To test the question, Jethro, at the suggestion of Auric, shifted their course and turned farther out on the lake. The change was quite marked. A minute later, Auric said in an excited undertone:

"They're after us sure; they have done the same as you."

"You are right," added Jethro, as he looked around; "but I'll try them again."

He now headed toward shore. He had taken only three or four strokes, when the Winnebagoes made a corresponding shift, and came on as before in a straight line. Jethro laid down his paddle.

"What do you mean by that?"

"What's the use of tiring myself, when I can't gain anything by it? If they want to give us a fight, the sooner it comes the better."

If such was the intention of the redskins, there was no possible escape from it for the boys. It was too early in the day to get any help from darkness. The sun was still high, and they were so far from land that the Indians would overhaul them before they could step ashore. Even if they were late in doing so, they would be near enough to the lads to reach them before they could go many steps.

"If they think we are trying to get away from them it will encourage them to work all the harder. We won't let them come too near."

It was evident that the Winnebagoes were surprised that two large boys in a canoe on the lake did not make every effort to flee from three Indians on the war path. The one who was paddling relaxed his work, though his approach continued. The youths watched every moment, Jethro having deliberately shifted about so as to face them.

"He has stopped paddling," remarked Auric; "what do you suppose that means?"

"We shall soon find out."

Something like fifty yards separated the parties. The Indian must have "backed water," for his canoe stopped, while that of our young friends was advancing slowly. The trio were looking fixedly at the boys, who plainly saw the ugly visages smeared with paint. If they spoke to one another, their voices were not heard.

Suddenly, without any warning, the one who laid down his paddle, picked up his gun at his feet, took aim and fired. It was done so quickly that the first notice was the puff of smoke, the sharp report, and the whistling of the bullet so close to the face of Auric Kingdon that he felt the wind as it nipped the hair just above his ear.

"Wait," whispered the youth; "let me fire first."

He brought his weapon to a level, aimed carefully and pulled trigger. If the Winnebagoes were astonished that the boys dared do a thing like that, they

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were still more astonished by the result of the shot. Incredible as it may seem, Auric Kingdon struck not one, but two of the miscreants. He did not kill either, but the bullet which he directed with so much skill went through the upper arm of the oarsman and imbedded itself in the shoulder of the warrior directly behind him.

That the shot hurt was proved by the respective yells of the two that were hit. The oarsman half rose from his seat, and dropped back so heavily that he fell against his companion who was nursing his wound.

"I don't know anything more dangerous than for an Indian to try to shoot an American youngster," said the exultant Auric with a grin; "Jet, can't you do better than I and pick off that handsome dog at the stern?"

"I think I could, but it's best for me to wait till you reload."

It was a sensible remark. Had the boys emptied their guns it would have been easy for the Winnebagoes to dash forward and be upon them before they could make ready with another shot. Accordingly, Auric set about ramming a charge home and pouring powder into the pan of his weapon.

One unharmed warrior was in the canoe and capable of firing his rifle. Jethro believed he would do so, and never took his eye from him. With his own

weapon almost at his shoulder, while Auric was reloading, he held himself ready for instant action. At the first move on the Winnebago's part, Jethro meant to aim and fire. It would seem that it would have been safe to do so without waiting for Auric to be ready, since the other two warriors were wounded. But there was no certainty as to the extent of their disability to use their guns, and it was in accordance with the training of both boys that so long as possible they should keep a loaded gun for any emergency.

Jethro was surprised that the unharmed Indian did not shoot, when the intervening distance was comparatively slight. He must have been frightened by the effects of the shot of the youth. The sufferers acted as if they had forgotten everything except their hurts. They could be seen shifting about, turning their heads, speaking to one another, and in sore trouble, while he at the stern appeared to be dazed.

Jethro could tell what his friend was doing, and know the exact progress he was making in reloading his rifle, without looking around. The slight but characteristic sounds were his guide. He waited till he heard him lift the hammer, and noted the soft rattling of the grains, as he poured the powder into the pan.

"Are you ready, Auric?"

"All ready."

"Very well; keep your eye on that fellow at the stern,

and at his first move, let him have it straight! You have time enough to make your aim sure; it mustn't be only wounding this time."

As he spoke, Jethro placed his gun in the bottom of the boat and took up the paddle again. Auric said nothing, for he understood the meaning of the act. Nothing was to be gained by holding the relative position to the other boat. Without any appearance of haste the lad began swinging his paddle, heading not toward land, but holding a course parallel with it.

Naturally, Auric kept his attention on the boat behind them. It remained stationary seemingly, while the occupants regained control of themselves, but soon the Winnebago who was unhurt took up the blade.

"They are making for shore," said Auric; "I guess they want to give better attention to the wounded ones than they can while in the boat."

The distance, as we know, was trifling and a few minutes later the canoe touched land and the three were seen to disembark. Two of them moved slowly, all quickly passing out of sight in the deep forest that lined the lake.

"They both deserved death," remarked Auric, "but, somehow or other, I'm glad I didn't kill either of them."

"I wonder how *they* would have felt, if that bullet

had passed through instead of so near your head," was the significant comment of Jethro.

"They would have been delighted, and then they would have gone for you; why didn't the third one try his hand on us?"

"He was scared out of his wits; he didn't want to provoke another shot; it is strange that he didn't catch up the paddle and make off as fast as he could."

"He may have thought that would have caused us to give chase; I tell you, Jet, there aren't many persons that can hit two Indians when he aims at only one."

"You had them in line, and have reason to be proud of your exploit; as it was, the third one must have had a pretty narrow escape."

"Well, there's one thing certain; he knows which one of us it was that winged him, and if we two ever meet again, matters will be lively between us; I should like to know who that third fellow was."

"Don't you know him? You have seen him at Dearborn; he called at Mr. Kinzie's when you were last there."

"I thought I had seen the one who was paddling, at Fort Wayne, but wasn't sure."

"No doubt you have seen all three."

"Do you know the name of the warrior who wasn't hit?"

"It is Wag-ma-rah and he is the worst of the lot. Nobody knows as much as Mr. Kinzie about all the tribes in these parts, and I have heard him say that Wag-ma-rah is a sneaking, treacherous wretch, who, though he has often sat at his table, would be delighted to scalp him and every member of his family."

CHAPTER VII

THE WAR PARTY

Auric Kingdon insisted upon exchanging places with Jethro Judd, who had paddled the canoe from the beginning. When it is remembered that he had spent a number of hours at the same work before their meeting on the southern shore, it will be seen that he had good reason to feel tired, but it was proof of his high health and rugged strength that he could have kept up the toil indefinitely. In truth, Auric had offered to take charge of the craft, when they put out from the beach, but his comrade preferred to leave to him the more important duty of looking after the Winnebagoes. Now, however, the change took place. Jethro, sitting at the bow and facing to the rear, kept a keen lookout for their enemies, while Auric, as he shifted the paddle from one side to the other, swept with his vision the broad expanse of water to the north and east.

The summer afternoon was drawing to a close. The storm that threatened two or three days before had passed and left the sky clear. The soft breeze stealing over the lake was a relief from the sultriness,

and Jethro especially enjoyed the relaxation. The course was so familiar to him, and indeed to both, that they always chose the same place for camping. It was at the foot of a giant oak that had been split asunder by lightning, the white splinters forming a prominent landmark which could be seen for several miles out on the lake. Owing to the delay, our young friend did not expect to reach the place until somewhat later than usual.

"Jet," said his companion, as he leisurely swung the paddle, "I don't think it best for us to camp on the old spot."

"Why not?"

"Our habit of doing so must be known to a good many of the Indians, and some of them may take a notion to pay us a visit while we sleep."

"It would be like them; shall we pass beyond or stop this side of the splintered oak?"

"I don't see that it can make any difference so long as we give it a wide berth: why not keep going all night?"

Jethro reflected a minute before replying:

"We should be pretty near Dearborn by sun-up, but the plan doesn't hit me as the best. We need sleep, and, if we keep at it till morning, we shall be pretty well tuckered out when we get home. We shall then be among the Indians that are swarming round the fort, and will need all our wits. I don't see that anything is to be gained by hurry."

"All right; we'll take our usual rest; one place will serve as well as another; I'll push on a while longer and then turn to shore."

The canoe stole along the shore like a phantom of the night. There being no haste, the work of Auric was only gentle exercise, quite acceptable to his arms, whose toil during the preceding few days could bear no comparison with that accomplished by his sturdy legs. The wind soon died out, and only the gentle lapping of the water against the sides of the frail craft, or the beach to their left, caught the ears of the youths. Each understood the art of paddling a canoe with very little or no noise, though it would have been different had they been compelled to use haste.

Suddenly Auric held the blade motionless. Neither spoke, for his friend understood the cause. Both had heard the faint sound made by other paddles. It came from a point out on the lake and not far off. The moon had not risen, and the stars were beginning to gleam in the clear vault overhead. Objects could be seen quite clearly for a number of rods. The youths peered out into the gloom, both having identified the direction of the sound. But they saw nothing to explain it.

Jethro was about to speak, when the two caught the faint ripple again. It came from the same point as before, and so much nearer that Auric backed

water, sending the canoe toward land, where it could have the protection of the deep shadows that put out from shore. Neither he nor his friend had any wish to be discovered by the strangers, until something could be learned concerning them. The recent experience would have suggested this, had not their training warned them to be careful at all times, even in trifling circumstances.

The boat moved under the overhanging branches of a tree, growing on the very margin of the lake, where it was effectually screened from any one who might have passed within a rod of them. Auric gently laid down the paddle and caught hold of a branch which brushed his shoulder, that he might hold the boat motionless. The two sat so near each other that they were not afraid to speak in whispers.

"Sh!" warned Jethro; "did you hear it? It looks as if they are coming across from St. Joseph or some point on the other side of the lake."

"They may be heading for Fort Wayne or Dearborn, but keeping farther off shore than we did," replied Auric.

"Sh!" whispered his friend again; "I see them!"

Even in that he was hardly a moment ahead of Auric, for both were peering at the right spot in the obscurity. What seemed to be a long, low shadow dimly took form as it came nearer in the gloom. The vague outlines soon revealed a large war canoe, in

which were seated seven Indians. This the boys learned by count, as the heads and shoulders assumed shape.

The first impression of the youths was that the redskins were heading so nearly toward them that discovery was inevitable. In such an event the consequences would have been disagreeable, to say the least. Auric meditated drawing the boat near enough to shore for them to spring out and take refuge in the depths of the woods, but, at the critical moment, the larger craft sheered to the right and made for a point that would bring them to land just far enough away to prevent the discovery of the couple in the smaller boat.

By a curious coincidence the warriors reversed their paddles, so as to bring their boat to a halt when near enough for a person to toss a basket from one canoe to the other. It is not often that a party of redskins, trained to perfection in the ways of the woods, allow themselves to be seen by strangers or enemies who are invisible to them, but such was the case in the present instance. Seated thus motionless on the water, the chief exchanged words with his warriors, two of whom had been using the paddles. The instant the first word was said, Auric recognized the tongue as Winnebago, a tribe who seemed destined to take a prominent part in the affairs of himself and friend.

Rarely does a white man placed as was this youth hold two such important advantages. His presence so near the redskins was not only unsuspected, but he understood everything said as clearly as if uttered in English. The conversation, of necessity, is translated liberally.

"Wag-ma-rah has not called to us or shown himself."

This, you will note, referred to the uninjured member of the smaller party, with whom our friends had had a collision. The remark was evidently made by the chief who sat at the stern of the large canoe.

"It may be our brother has gone to Wayne with his friends."

"That cannot be; he has no need to go there; he was ordered to meet us at the place where the young palefaces make their camp, and that is near."

This was interesting news to Auric, as it would prove to Jethro, when the words were translated for him. Auric did not dare do this, while the Winnebagoes were so near, for none has sharper ears than the red men of the forest.

Evidently the fact that no signal had been made by the absent trio was a puzzle to the larger party.

"I think we could give them a point or two," thought Auric Kingdon, though he took good care to repress the chuckle that struggled for utterance.

Finally one of the warriors made a daring suggestion:

"The guns of the palefaces may have slain Wagma-rah and his friends."

The chief's comment upon this remark was a sound so peculiar that it cannot be described. The boys had heard something of the kind before and knew what it meant. It resembled the grunt made by a frightened pig more than anything else, and expressed the disgust of the chief with the thought that had just been uttered. He did not even speak.

A Winnebago, who until this moment had held his peace, seemed to think it was time for him to put in his oar.

"They have gone farther to the south than they meant; they may keep on till they reach Fort Wayne, and we shall see nothing more of them for days."

"They were told to meet us at the camp of the young palefaces," repeated the chief, who, it was apparent, was in a cross mood.

"We must wait to hear them tell why they did not do so," ventured another, who, it will be noted, repeated the sentiment of Auric Kingdon uttered earlier in the day.

Silence reigned among the Winnebagoes for two or three minutes, the men who used the paddles awaiting the commands of their chieftain. All that our young friends did was to breathe and peer and listen. The slight hold which Auric kept on the overhanging

limb held the canoe motionless, and neither dared so much as shift foot or hand.

Auric had heard enough to suggest more than one interesting query that flitted through his active brain. He could not understand why the first three warriors had paddled to the southern end of the lake, failed to make hunt for him, when they knew he must be in the neighborhood, and then returned and headed up the western shore again. What could have been their errand in thus going only a few miles on foot in the direction of Fort Wayne and then coming back? He could not make a reasonable conjecture.

Why, too, was the rendezvous arranged to be at the camping site of the boys? Could they know that Jethro had set out to meet his friend and that both were due to spend the night where they had spent so many previous ones? Finally, if this were so, what bearing did it have upon Auric and Jethro themselves?

These were but a few of the thoughts and questions which stirred the youth, who eagerly waited for more words that would throw light on what was an insolvable mystery to him. Perhaps, by and by, Jethro, who had better knowledge than he of the present conditions at Fort Dearborn, would be able to enlighten him, when the words should be interpreted.

At the end of the brief interval named, the Winnebago chieftain said something, but in such a low tone that the listening Auric did not catch it. It must

have been an order for the couple with the paddles to use them, for their sound was heard the next moment and the large canoe began moving.

Neither of our young friends spoke or stirred until after the boat had passed from sight and the noise of the paddling faintly reached their ears.

"I'm anxious to know what they said," whispered Jethro; "I suppose you understood it?"

"Every word except the last of the one who must be the leader; his voice was so low that I did not hear him clearly."

Thereupon Auric related the substance of the conversation of the war party.

"I don't know what to make of it," he added; "do you?"

"No; it is too much for me."

Auric recalled the questions that came to him while acting the eavesdropper, and his comrade was unable to enlighten him. However, they could not help making a few guesses.

"If Wag-ma-rah promised to meet the party at our old camping-ground, he must have been kept from doing so by the wounds of the other two," said Jethro.

"How could that hinder him?"

"You know they went ashore instead of keeping to their canoe; we have come a considerable distance in ours and they could not have walked it in the same time."

"Still they might have signalled to the chief."

"The chief didn't signal to them, and they may have had some understanding about neither doing so before they reached our camp."

"What gets me," continued Auric, "is how we came to figure in this business. These men have not come from Dearborn —"

"We can't be sure of that till I have a look at their faces," interrupted Jethro; "if they did, I shall know them when we meet."

"It doesn't strike me as safe to try to meet them before we reach Dearborn."

"I didn't mean we should make the effort, though I am curious to learn whether they are strangers or acquaintances. It doesn't seem reasonable that they should go through all this dilly-dallying for us alone; they must have some other scheme on foot and it happens that our paths cross."

"Well, we may keep guessing all night and be none the wiser; I propose that we follow them and see whether we can pick up anything more, without running too great risk ourselves."

"All right; feel your way, or we shall step into a hornet's nest before we know it."

Now, the common sense of the boys showed them their plain duty. They should have paddled silently far out on the lake, so as to make certain of being well clear of the war party, who they had good reason

to believe were enemies. Then they ought to have turned northwards and taken turns in paddling until safe at Fort Dearborn. But, although such a prudent course suggested itself to both, neither mentioned it. They were anxious to learn more of the party whose words and action were so puzzling to them, and they set out to do so.

Instead of putting out from land they kept as near to it as they could, so close at times that the overhanging limbs brushed the head and shoulders of both. The advantage of this course was that if any danger appeared unexpectedly, they could dart to the shore and find refuge in the depths of the forest.

Although neither was able to see anything of the canoe in front, they knew it was still in motion, for the rippling of the paddles came to them. There was no reason why the Winnebagoes, so far as they knew, should use caution, else the pursuit would have been more difficult on the part of our friends.

"We're getting pretty close to our camp," whispered Jethro, some time later; "I don't hear their paddles."

Auric held his blade suspended and both listened. All was silent, save the dull murmur of the lake and solitude, and the almost inaudible lapping of the waves on the beach.

"They have stopped," said Auric, in the same guarded undertone.

"They must have landed where we expected to camp."

There seemed little doubt of this, and the youth handled his paddle with the greatest care. When he had passed a hundred yards or more, Jethro whispered to him to stop. He did so, and the two used their eyes and ears to the utmost. They saw and heard nothing, though certain they were very near the war party.

They had sat thus like a couple of statues for fifteen minutes, when Jethro said in an almost inaudible voice:

"Look!"

A beam of light shot out from the wood and was reflected on the placid surface of the lake. It was only a brief distance away, and the light rapidly increased. The meaning was clear to the two youths: the Winnebagoes had not only encamped on the site of their camp, but had started a fire, as if they intended to spend the night there.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT

WHY the Winnebagoes should have started a fire would have been inexplainable to any one not familiar with their habits. The night was so sultry that the additional warmth should have been unwelcome, and they had no intention of preparing food, all having partaken so recently that its need was not felt. But, as we know, there is a sociability, when in the woods at night, in a good, roaring blaze which sends its glow into the gloomy depths around. Even savages find it more pleasant to look in one another's faces than to sit or lie in the gloom where only the sound of voices or the glow of pipes shows that one has human beings within call.

Rarely do a party of Indians halt for the night without kindling a fire, unless safety forbids the risk. It was for this reason that the little party of Winnebagoes gathered woods and branches, and heaping them together applied the spark by means of flint and steel, after the manner of white men.

"Now," said Jethro, when they had drawn as near as prudent, "we'll have a look at those fellows

and I think I shall be able to tell something about them."

Their first thought was of stealing alongshore in their canoe, with the purpose of gaining the coveted view, but this was too dangerous. The light thrown out by the blaze would so expose them as to make it almost certain they would be discovered. The only means was to land and then go as near as prudent. This ought to be easy without running great risk, and it was agreed it should be done.

Accordingly, Auric pressed the end of his paddle against the bottom and forced the prow of the canoe to land.

"There's no use of your going," whispered Jethro.

"Why not?" asked his comrade in surprise.

"If they have ever shown themselves at Dearborn, I shall know it, while you won't be able to identify them."

"But I should like to have the pleasure of admiring their beautiful faces when they are daubed all over with paint."

"As you please; suppose you come upon them from this side, while I pass around so as to view them from a different point."

"I'm agreeable."

Each knew the need of caution, and therefore did not offer advice to the other. It was agreed that after gaining a satisfying view of the party, they should

make their way back to the boat and resume their voyage up the lake. The reconnoissance ought not to take more than half an hour.

Since Jethro had given himself the longest distance to traverse, Auric stayed near the canoe for some minutes after they parted company. He wished that the view might be gained by each about the same time.

With some misgivings as to the prudence of his course, Jethro passed well into the wood, keeping so far from the camp that he could catch a glimpse only now and then of the twinkle of the blaze, which was kept at a vigorous point. He maintained this distance until he had traversed the quarter circle necessary to place the camp directly between him and the lake. Then, with the skill of a veteran scout or a Winnebago himself, he crouched low, with his knees close to the ground, and began his approach. The undergrowth was so dense and interwoven that it was necessary to get quite near to the camp before he could scrutinize the company with satisfaction.

Never yielding to impatience or advancing an inch without literally feeling his way, he kept this up until the moment came when the coveted view was gained. He rose to the standing posture behind the trunk of a large tree, that seemed to be oak, though he could not make sure in the darkness. It was safe for him to stand thus and, without removing his cap, peep out

from behind the screen at the company in which he was interested.

The sight was curious, though it was not the first time he had looked upon similar pictures. Counting again, he saw the seven Winnebagoes were before him. It was easy to identify the chief, from his gorgeous head-dress of stained eagle feathers and the brilliancy of the gaudy but somewhat tarnished sash which inclosed his ample waist. He was seated on the upper part of the oak that had been torn off by the lightning bolt and lay on the ground at the base of the stump. This piece was two or three feet in diameter, stretching away in the gloom, where the withered branches faintly showed in the firelight. The fire burned almost at his feet, so that his countenance and body were in as plain sight as if the sun were shining. He had leaned his rifle against the log beside him, and was smoking a long-stemmed pipe of red clay. His head was bent, and, as he slowly puffed the vapor from his coppery lips, his eyes remained dreamily fixed on the blaze, as if he were sunk in meditation and unconscious of his companions around him.

A foot or more to his right sat a warrior occupied in precisely the same way. Three others were lolling on the ground and also smoking, though they occasionally said something to one another, and now and then shifted their position, as if ill at ease. The

remaining two were stretched out at full length, so motionless that it was evident they were asleep.

Naturally the young scout centred his attention on the chief. His first impression was that he had seen him at Fort Dearborn, but the relative position of the two prevented his making sure until he had studied him from another point of view, or the sachem should shift the position of his face, which was such that the light did not fall fairly upon it. In the hope that a study of the warriors would help, Jethro scanned each in turn, so far as the situation would permit. He did not recognize one; all were strangers.

"That makes it look as if the chieftain is also a stranger," reflected our young friend, "but I should like to get a better sight of him; he must change his pose pretty soon."

But the minutes passed and the sachem sat as if cast in bronze. Time was slipping, and, anxious to rejoin his friend who was now at some distance, Jethro sank down behind the trunk, and began stealing toward another tree a couple of rods away. He was as cautious as ever, for he would have belied his training had he been otherwise. Despite all his care, however, a twig snapped under his knee, though the sound was so slight that he was sure it did not reach the camp. Nevertheless, he raised his head and peered through the undergrowth to find the positions of the chieftain and warriors precisely as before.

Resuming his labored progress, Jethro finally halted behind another favoring trunk, somewhat nearer the camp. Slowly coming to the upright position again, he peeped out at the group some rods away. At the moment of doing so, one of the Winnebagoes, who had been lolling on the ground, rose to his feet, picked up a number of sticks lying near, and flung them on the blaze. It immediately flared up and sent out a stronger illumination than ever. Carefully looking around from behind the tree, the youth gained the view he was seeking.

The chief had taken his pipe from his mouth, and, turning his head, so as to bring his irregular profile in clear relief, was saying something to the warrior sitting on his right, several of the others showing interest in his words.

The first fair look at the painted countenance showed Jethro that the leader was a stranger, whom he had never seen until now. This confirmed him in the belief that the party had come from the other side of the lake, keeping well to the southward while doing so, because of the great breadth of the sheet of water. The conclusion from this discovery was that these warriors had been drawn toward Fort Dearborn because of the growing unrest among the tribes. They were in their war paint, but the connection between them and the three with whom our young friends had had a collision was not yet explainable.

Jethro stood for some minutes studying the group, but, after all, there was nothing specially interesting in them. He decided to make his way back to his comrade, and then, as has already been intimated, they would resume their voyage for Fort Dearborn. The youth was about to sink to the ground again, preparatory to withdrawing far enough to allow him to walk freely, when a curious impulse led him to count the group once more. Somehow or other, it struck him that a change had taken place, though he was far from suspecting its nature until he had made the enumeration.

To his amazement there were only six in the group!

Thinking he had made an error, though with so small a number this seemed unlikely, he counted them again. One had certainly disappeared, and the next moment he saw which one it was.

The chief and his companion on the log had hardly moved. As has been shown, the warrior who replenished the fire was a member of the three that had been lolling on the ground. Of the two who had seemed to be asleep, one was missing.

He must have risen to his feet while Jethro was changing his own position, and had withdrawn his gaze from the group. Where had the fellow gone and what did it mean?

"It can't mean anything; he will be back in a minute —"

At that instant the lad heard a footstep behind him. He turned his head like a flash. Not twenty feet away, in the glow of the camp-fire, which shot beyond the tree that had sheltered the youth, stood the vanished Winnebago, looking calmly at him. He held his rifle grasped with both hands, the muzzle lowered, but the position such that he could bring it to his shoulder and fire in the twinkling of an eye. If ever one person had "the drop" on another, the Indian had it on Jethro Judd.

"Hooh! Brudder! hooh!" he muttered in his gruff voice, the words being the only ones — if they can be considered words — which the redskin was able to utter in English.

And like a flash, too, the explanation of the disaster came to the victim. The keen ear of the Indian had heard the soft snapping of a twig, and, suspecting its meaning, had slipped unseen to the rear of the point whence the sound came, and stolen upon the lad without a shadow of suspicion on his part.

Having uttered his exclamation, the Winnebago held his ground, waiting to see what his captive intended to do. As for Jethro, he was quick to realize he could do nothing at all. Had he been given the slightest warning of what was coming, he would have made instant use of his gun, and then trusted to his heels and the darkness to escape the others; but it was beyond his power to do anything of that sort now.

It only remained to make the best of a situation that seemingly could be no worse.

With that optimisim which is a part of every healthy boy's nature, the thought came to him that since he had received no real proof of the enmity of this party, it might be that they were friends, or at least indifferent enough to refrain from harming him. He stepped from behind the tree, and, with a cordiality which it is unnecessary to say was hypocritical, called:

"How do you do, brother?"

Jethro did not dare step toward him, lest this captor should take it as a hostile sign and use his gun. He faced the other way, and walked forward into the full glow of the camp-fire. The moment he started, the six raised their eyes and looked at him. A slight noise from the rear told Jethro that his captor was following. The lad would have liked to look back, but was afraid to do so.

When so near the blaze that the heat was uncomfortable, Jethro halted, and, looking at the chief, made a military salute and repeated his greeting:

"How do you do, brother?"

The sachem did not stir, but fixing his glittering eyes on him, and keeping the stem of his pipe between his lips, grunted. The others stared and were silent.

"Speak English?" asked the prisoner, glancing from one face to another. He was not answered. No one present could understand him, or if he did, he

pretended ignorance. This made the situation of the youth painfully embarrassing, for he did not know what to do, and his captors showed no hurry in deciding what they should do with him. Fortunately he had stood thus but a brief while, when the suspense was broken by a startling occurrence.

It will be recalled that Auric Kingdon had chosen almost the opposite side of the camp for his reconnoissance, and he waited in order to give his comrade a chance to make his inspection at the same time. Although Auric knew almost the precise point where his friend would make his first survey, and he peered keenly across the camp in that direction, he did not catch the most flitting glimpse. It would have been strange had he done so, when Jethro took such care to avoid detection. If Auric could have seen him, it would have been equally easy for the Winnebagoes to do the same, and, imprudent as the youth had been, he was incapable of such stupidity.

Since all the Winnebagoes were strangers to Auric, he was anxious to leave the place without any further delay. He was sorry the halt had been made. It was a mistake that could do them no good and might bring harm. He regretted it, but all he could now do was to await the return of his friend, which he hoped would not be long postponed.

From Auric's position, as carefully guarded as that of the other, he saw the warrior rise abruptly from

the ground, in response to a sharp command of the chief, and move off into the wood. But little did the watcher dream of the meaning of the act.

The surprise came when he observed Jethro walk forth into the glow of the camp-fire, halt in front of the chieftain, salute and address him. Auric naturally supposed that he had recognized a friend in him, though, even on that theory, the action of the youth was imprudent. Not until the warrior that was following him came into view did a suspicion of the truth come to the dismayed Auric. The pose of the single Indian, with his gun ready to use, and his halt directly behind Jethro, made the astonishing truth plain; the youth had been taken prisoner.

The feelings of Auric perhaps can be imagined, but for a minute or two he was at his wits' end. Could he do anything for his friend, and, if so, what?

Yes: there was one and only one thing for him to do. Stepping from behind his screen he strode forward, never pausing until he was within a pace or two of the other. The Winnebagoes surveyed the new arrival with wonder. To them the reason was a mystery.

As for Jethro he was quick to comprehend and was indignant.

"What do you mean?" he asked angrily; "is it not enough that I should make a fool of myself without your doing the same?"

"Aren't you in a bad scrape, Jet?"

"Certainly; the worst of my life."

"Well, I'm going to stand by you; did you expect me to sneak off and run away and leave you in such a fix? I ain't that sort of chap, Jet."

His comrade was touched, for he appreciated the unselfishness of his friend. None the less, he regretted it.

"But you can do me no good, Auric; it was very good in you and perhaps I should have done the same for you."

"Of course you would, old fellow, so say nothing more about it."

"Well, we're in for it! We can do nothing."

"You forget one thing, Jet; I understand their lingo and you don't; do you know whether any of them speak English?"

"I think not, but can't be sure."

"Very well; I shall pick up some interesting knowledge."

"I can't see that it will do you any good, for they will act as they choose, without regard to that. If we don't understand their words, we shall know what their actions mean."

During this brief interchange the chieftain and his warriors continued gazing at the lads without speaking or making any move to interfere with them. The curious situation, however, could not last.

"Are they strangers to you?" asked Auric.

"I never saw any of them before."

"Then they don't belong near Dearborn; they must have come across the lake, though plenty of their tribe are hanging round the fort."

"How would it do, Auric, for you to speak to the chief in his own tongue?"

"I have been thinking about that, but its best to wait; I don't see what good it can do either of us."

"It may please him, for it will show that you have associated with his people; you might make him believe you have lived among them; so you have, though not as long as he would think."

"I'll wait till they have talked among themselves; I shall be likely to pick up something that may be of use when I start in with Winnebago — helloa!"

From some point in the woods came a shout, its nature showing that it was emitted by an Indian. The chief himself replied, while all showed an interest in the expected arrival. The sachem straightened up on the log, but did not rise. His companion came to his feet, as did those lolling on the earth, including the one who seemed to be asleep.

The next minute a warrior came into sight, followed by a second and a third.

The first had a number of broad green leaves tied with deer thongs about his upper right arm.

The second showed a similar clumsy bandage held

in place at his shoulder, the arm of which hung useless at his side.

The third, walking at the rear, was unharmed.

The three were Wag-ma-rah and his friends, with whom the youths had had their fight earlier in the evening.

CHAPTER IX

AT COURT

If Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd had been hopeful, even in a slight degree, of a "benevolent neutrality" on the part of the Winnebagoes, such hope now vanished, with the arrival of the three warriors whom they had fought, with the result of wounding two of them. The enmity which they showed in making the attack upon the youths in their canoe was intensified by the consequences of such attack.

When Auric recognized the trio as they emerged from the wood and entered the circle of light thrown out by the camp-fire, he turned to his companion, compressed his lips, and shook his head.

"We're in for it now, Jet."

The latter nodded: there could be no question of that fact.

They noted the malignant glare of the party as they came forward, but, before giving the prisoners attention, they must make explanations to the chief, whose orders they had disobeyed. Every one of the company, with the exception of the leader, rose to his feet. The latter remained seated on the log, and

sharply surveyed Wag-ma-rah, who, standing a few paces in front of his wounded companions, spoke for them and himself. Auric and Jethro were a little to the left of the newcomers, and they, like the rest, kept their attention upon the sachem who was master of ceremonies. Placed thus, Auric, in a low voice, translated the utterances for his friend.

The chief was the first to speak. His iron features assumed a greater sternness of expression when he addressed Wag-ma-rah.

"He asks him why he did not come to this place, as he was told to do, and wait for Bur-no-mo, — that must be the name of the chief himself," said Auric.

"Wag-ma-rah replies that while on his way to do so, his canoe was stolen by us — Oh, what a liar he is!" muttered the interpreter.

"The chief wants to know the particulars; I wonder if Wag-ma-rah can get up a yarn that will pass muster. He says they had gone ashore to hunt, and when they came back the young thieves — that means *us* — were a half mile away in the boat, but near the beach. They pursued us, and we ran the canoe ashore and took to the woods. (Why should we do *that?*) They came up and took the boat and we fired upon them from the wood and wounded the two warriors. They would have followed and slain us, had not the hurts of the couple required attention. To dress the wounds as we see they did, in their rough way, took them

so long that they were kept from coming to this place till after the time fixed upon. How will that do, Jet, for a first-class whopper?" asked Auric, who, despite the gravity of the situation, was amused by the superb falsifying. "Shall I give the old fellow the truth?"

"No; he wouldn't believe you; maybe he doesn't believe Wag-ma-rah; if he knew as much about him as I do he wouldn't credit a word he says."

"I hope the chief will ask him to explain where *our* canoe was when all this was going on," said Auric, listening closely to the conversation.

But the sachem did not put the question.

"He is asking him when he left Fort Dearborn," explained Auric; "now we shall hear something interesting."

The youth kept up his running interpretation.

"Wag-ma-rah says they came away yesterday in the night, so no one would know where they were going. They intended to follow you and make you prisoner; then they would push on toward Fort Wayne till they gathered me in. That makes clear a part of this business, provided Wag-ma-rah is speaking the truth, which is mighty hard for him to do."

"Why did they want to make us captives?" Jethro asked.

"Listen, and maybe we shall learn. The scamp must have known when you left Fort Dearborn that you were on your way to meet me, though from

what he said, he started ahead of you. Ah, here it comes!"

Auric allowed the two to talk for several minutes before he explained their words to his friend. He wished to have a connected story.

"It was a cunning scheme," he said; "they meant to take us to the other side of the lake where some of their tribe has a village and hold us there as hostages. They have found out in some way that orders have been sent to Captain Heald to abandon the fort and take his soldiers and all the people to Detroit. The captain has a big supply of goods, including liquor, which the Indians are anxious to get; they will agree to surrender you and me, provided the captain will exchange his goods for us. I wonder if that's true," added Auric, turning in some excitement to his comrade.

"We can't tell, except that it isn't true *now;* what do you suppose they would do, if they once laid hands on us?"

"I daresn't think — wait!"

Again the interpreter listened for a few minutes before translating.

"Wag-ma-rah has asked that he be allowed to carry out his plan. He says he will take us to the other side of the lake and then come back and let Captain Heald know what can be done. The chief seems struck with the idea, but you saw him shake his head just now. As he did so, he replied that he would

have been willing had Wag-ma-rah and his warriors made us prisoners, but we belong to *him* and not to Wag-ma-rah. I say, Jet, that's a good point," added Auric; "I hope Bur-no-mo will stick to it."

From what he had been told, Jethro knew Wag-ma-rah was urging his views upon the chief, who must have been a man of considerable authority, thus to be deferred to by three warriors of his tribe who were not under his direct control. The sachem was seen to shake his head, and once a grim smile lit up his painted visage, as if he was pleased over the advantage which he had gained through the action of the boys themselves.

But whatever amusement our young friends might have felt speedily yielded before the pleadings that followed. Finding the chief would not agree to the first proposal of Wag-ma-rah, the latter appealed to the most powerful motive that sways the nature of the American Indian — revenge. These pale-faced youths he claimed had committed an unpardonable outrage, for which they could not be too savagely punished. He made the frightful proposal that they should be burned at the stake then and there!

Auric held his breath, and paled at these dreadful words. Jethro knew that something horrible was in the air, but awaited the explanation.

The chief was quite willing to enjoy with his warriors such a pleasing entertainment, as it is to be

feared he had done in former instances, and the only question that restrained him was the fear of consequences. Although war had been declared between England and the United States, and the red men would fight for the former, such awful practices would be frowned upon by their allies as much as by their enemies. The truth would be sure to come out sooner or later, and then it might be made unpleasant for all concerned.

Wag-ma-rah insisted that the truth need never be known. If it should, how could it be determined who the guilty ones were? Protected by their Great Father across the ocean, how could the Americans manage to get them in their power?

These were strong arguments, and had their effect upon the sachem with whom the decision rested. He was disposed to grant the request, and his hesitation was probably in the nature of punishment for Wag-ma-rah's disregard of his orders. Had he been found at this place with the boys as his captives, the chieftain would not have made any opposition to his prayer. Rather he would have favored it, for he was an unadulterated savage through and through.

"Great heavens!" whispered the terrified Auric, after explaining the awful question that hung in the balance, "I believe the chieftain means to consent."

"To burn us at the stake?" gasped Jethro, upon whose forehead the cold perspiration gathered.

"That's what they are talking about. The chief pretends he is afraid our people will find it out, but I think he says so only to plague Wag-ma-rah, and by and by will allow him to do as he pleases with us."

"At the first move they make we must dash into the woods."

"It won't do us the least good; they will grab us before we take a half dozen steps; I've something in mind better than that."

"What is it?"

"As soon as the decision is made I'll raise my gun and shoot Wag-ma-rah dead in his tracks; you do the same with the chief, who is as much responsible as he."

"And what then?"

"Dive among the trees."

"How shall we have a better chance than now?"

"It will throw them into confusion for a minute or two and we can take advantage of that, but I'll own we haven't one chance in a million."

"I think the time has come, Auric, for you to say something to the chief; it won't do any hurt and possibly may help us."

"I'll try it."

Wag-ma-rah was urging his views on the sachem, when the youth, prefacing his words with a military salute, addressed Bur-no-mo:

"Let not the great chief of the Winnebagoes listen

to the words of Wag-ma-rah, who is a snake; his tongue is forked; he has told lies to the mighty Bur-no-mo."

These words were spoken in what might be called classical Winnebago, and, to put it mildly they made a sensation. No member of the party had dreamed that a word which passed among them was understood by either of the captives, and one of them was now using the tongue as if to the manner born.

Every eye was fixed upon the face of Auric, and there could be no mistaking the wonder felt by Chief Bur-no-mo upon hearing himself addressed in this fashion. Even Wag-ma-rah looked in astonishment at the audacious youth, and must have felt a momentary chagrin to reflect that his grotesque version of their fight was understood by the prisoner.

Having made his speech, Auric Kingdon remained facing the chieftain and awaiting his reply. A minute passed without any, and he added:

"Wag-ma-rah and his warriors are dogs and squaws; what he told the great chieftain Bur-no-mo, who speaks with a single tongue, is a lie. We were paddling in our canoe along the lake when he fired his rifle at us. The distance was short, but his hand trembled so that his bullet went wide of the mark; he was afraid, for he knew we had no fear of him; then I raised my gun and shot; the single bullet wounded these two warriors; then Wag-ma-rah was so scared that he could

not move; we took pity on him and paddled away; he bellowed like the two that were struck by my bullet, and they begged us to spare them."

It will be observed that our young friend, in the excitement of the occasion perhaps, exaggerated somewhat, and got his facts a little askew, but he certainly had palliation for doing so. The effect of Auric's astonishing narrative was peculiar. Wag-ma-rah turned his head to look at him the moment he spoke his first word in his tongue. When he heard the blistering terms in which the youth referred to him, his eyes flashed and he laid his hand on the hilt of the knife at his girdle. Auric drew back the hammer of his rifle, ready to shoot on the first demonstration. The attention of every one was centred upon the couple.

Chief Bur-no-mo did a remarkable thing. He raised his hand, peremptorily ordered his warrior to refrain, and then laughed, clearly and unmistakably!

It is rarely that the American Indian indulges in mirth, especially in such exceptional circumstances as the present, but the chief could not fail to see the humorous element in the situation. The yarn spun by Wag-ma-rah had been challenged to his face by the last person in the world who was expected to do a thing of that nature.

"Does my brother speak with a single tongue?" asked the chieftain of the youth.

Chief Bur-no-mo laughs *Page* 106

"He is not like the dog Wag-ma-rah, who sat at the table of the white man and then tried to slay him; if he dared he would slay the great and good chieftain Bur-no-mo because he stands in his path."

Ignoring this somewhat forceful remark, the sachem asked:

"How does my son speak with the tongue of my people?"

"I have spent many happy days among them; I have slept in their lodges and I have hunted the forests for game with them; the Winnebagoes are my friends, — all excepting the dog of a Wag-ma-rah and the warriors with him who sought our lives."

It would be interesting could we know the thoughts of the chieftain, while listening to these remarkable words of the youthful prisoner. He must have felt a certain admiration for one who dared thus to refer to the savage warrior standing almost at his elbow, and ready to shoot him upon the first demonstration of enmity. Then, too, it was pleasant to hear the lad speak in the tongue of the Winnebago.

Bur-no-mo shifted his glance to Jethro Judd. Understanding his meaning, Auric shook his head.

"He does not speak the tongue of the mighty chieftain, but he is my friend; he is the friend of Mr. Kinzie at Fort Dearborn, whom all Indians love, for he is a good and just man."

All this was true, but how would it affect the

disposition of the chief to grant the request of Wag-ma-rah that the captive should be tortured? Auric tried to clinch the momentous question.

"If Bur-no-mo lets the dog of Wag-ma-rah do as he wishes with us the news will go to our Great Father at Detroit, and he will punish all the Winnebagoes and their chieftain, because he allowed Wag-ma-rah to put us to death."

"Who shall carry the tidings to the Great Father?"

It was a significant question indeed, and one which Auric could not answer. Despite the good impression he had made, it is to be feared that the frightful fate which was impending would not have been averted, but for an unexpected interruption at the critical moment, when the last ray of hope seemed to have fled.

CHAPTER X

BLACK PARTRIDGE

When the situation was at its tensest point, a brawny Indian walked out from the forest, and paused in the circle of light in front of the chieftain, whose astonishment was as profound as that of his warriors. He came from the direction of the lake, moving so softly through the wood and undergrowth that not the slightest sound was made by his moccasins. He was unusually tall, quite thin, and wore the usual dress of his race, being without any blanket because of the sultriness of the season. At his waist were the tomahawk and hunting knife of his people, and he carried a long flint-lock rifle in his hand. Three stained eagle feathers protruded from his crown, the loose, heavy, black hair dangling about his shapely shoulders. He was in middle life, with rather attractive features that were more regular in contour than is generally seen among his kind. It was notable that he had no paint on his face; unlike those around him, he was not on the war path.

"Black Partridge!" exclaimed the delighted Jethro, who in his pleasure stepped forward and impulsively

offered his hand. Auric did the same, for he knew the distinguished Pottawatomie well. Black Partridge gravely shook hands with each in turn, but did not speak or make any response to the exclamation of Jethro:

"I never was so glad in my life to see you, Black Partridge; you couldn't have come at a better time."

The two chiefs belonged to different tribes, but that the Pottawatomie was the greater was proved by the action of the Winnebago, who instantly rose to his feet and said with every appearance of respect:

"Bur-no-mo welcomes his brother, the great and good Black Partridge, and he will be glad to serve him in any way he can."

This was said in his own tongue, which the visitor understood as well as his own. The same may be said of Auric Kingdon, who, as you will remember, possessed a peculiar gift for acquiring the dialect of the red men. Of course, Jethro had to depend upon his observation, which gave him a general idea of the trend of matters.

Black Partridge had some knowledge of the situation, but he could not know all. The sight of two wounded Winnebagoes, and the interview going on between Wag-ma-rah and Auric on one hand and Bur-no-mo on the other, had grave significance, with which he meant to acquaint himself at once. His demeanor was dignified, and, looking sternly into the face of the chieftain, he asked:

"What is the meaning of that which I see? Why are my young friends standing here in the presence of Bur-no-mo? And what has *he*," pointing scornfully at Wag-ma-rah, "to do with all this?"

"My son will answer Black Partridge," replied the chieftain, with a shadowy grin on his painted visage. Evidently there was a vein of waggery in the composition of the Winnebago leader, who enjoyed the discomfiture of the malignant warrior. When the visitor turned inquiringly to Auric, he hurriedly told his story, but he did so in English, for he aimed to stick closely to the truth, and did not wish the other chief to know he had not done so in the former instance.

"He has told you everything," Jethro hastened to add. "Wag-ma-rah wants to burn us at the stake, and he would do so but for you."

After his contemptuous reference to the miscreant, Black Partridge scorned to give him notice for the moment. He addressed the chief in low, threatening tones:

"Would my brother have permitted this?"

"No," was the prompt response, and it can never be known whether or not the Winnebago spoke the truth. But he held the more exalted chieftain in awe.

"It is well; had Bur-no-mo done so I should have brained him with my own tomahawk! I would have slain Wag-ma-rah and carried the news to the Great

Father at Detroit, who would have treated every one of the Winnebagoes in the same way."

This was certainly putting the matter in a strong light, but it may be pleaded that the circumstances warranted it. The wrath of Black Partridge was fearful. Whipping out his tomahawk, he turned fiercely on the cowering Wag-ma-rah.

"Begone! you and your warriors!"

One command was sufficient. The terrified Winnebago slunk back a few paces till he stood beside his wounded comrades, to whom he said something in an excited undertone. Then all three wheeled and sped into the woods like frightened sheep.

Bur-no-mo actually threw back his head and shook with laughter. It was the best joke he had seen in a long time, and his way of showing it was unprecedented. Even our young friends smiled, as they could well afford to do.

But there was no smile on the face of Black Partridge. His angry demeanor quickly subdued the mirth of the Winnebago, who listened respectfully to his words.

"My sons have been kept here too long; they will go with me to Fort Dearborn; does my brother go there?"

Bur-no-mo signified that such was his intention. He had heard that Captain Heald and his soldiers were soon to leave the place, and they wished to witness

his departure. The cunning scamp gave no hint of the plunder which he hoped to secure.

"A good many of his people are already there, but there is room for all that choose to come. I bid my brother good night."

The Pottawatomie made a half military salute and answered:

"Bur-no-mo is the friend of the great Black Partridge; what he tells him to do, that he will do."

Without further response, Black Partridge said to Auric:

"Go to the lake; I will follow you."

The wise fellow was taking no chances. He knew none of the party dare offer him harm, but a stealthy shot might be fired at one of the youths, if the temptation was inviting enough. It need not be said that Auric did not hesitate. Hardly had the command been given, when the procession started for the lake near at hand. No demonstration was made against them, and a minute later all stood beside the two canoes, for Black Partridge had drawn up his boat alongside that of his friends.

This distinguished leader of the Pottawatomies, who is identified with the early history of Chicago, was never demonstrative. Few of his race are. Knowing this, the boys, whose lives he had been the means of saving, restrained the ardor of their gratitude, and silently awaited his commands.

His demeanor was curious. Instead of shoving his canoe clear of the land he stood at the prow, evidently meditating some weighty question to which he made no reference. The moon, that was near the full, had risen, and was far up the sky, its reflection showing upon the rippling water at their feet. The ribbon of shadow alongshore was so narrowed that the stern of the youths' boat caught the faint light.

The Pottawatomie stood thus for two or three minutes, his fine figure dimly outlined in the gloom, while he seemed oblivious of the presence of any one else. The boys were puzzled, but knew better than to question him. When he chose, he would give all the information he cared them to have. They did not venture even to shove their own boat clear until he should set the example.

Suddenly he turned to Jethro.

"My son met his friend at the lower end of the lake to-day?"

"Yes, Black Partridge."

"And you two are on your way to Fort Dearborn?"

"You know Auric and I visit each other; it is his turn to come to my home; when one of us sets out, we always meet somewhere along the trail, generally where we did to-day."

"How long does my son mean to stay at Fort Dearborn?" asked the chieftain of Auric, but before he could answer, Jethro put in:

"A good long while; many weeks."

"No; he will not," said the Pottawatomie, lowering his voice and speaking impressively.

"What do you mean?" asked the startled Jethro.

"*A few weeks from now there will be no Fort Dearborn!*"

Both lads caught their breath. Jethro asked in a whisper:

"Do you mean that the Indians will destroy it, Black Partridge?"

"I have spoken," was his reply in the same significant tone.

The boys were silent. They could not mistake the meaning of the chief, and their hearts were as lead. His next words were startlingly depressing:

"My sons must go back to Fort Wayne."

"Why should we do that, Black Partridge?" asked Auric in great disappointment.

"They will not live if they go to Fort Dearborn; the hearts of the Indians are bad; Captain Heald is not wise."

"But they will need our help," said Jethro; "it would be wrong for me to stay away, when Mr. Kinzie and his family are in danger."

The chief did not reply for a moment. Then he gravely said:

"Let my sons enter their canoe and make haste to Fort Wayne: tell them there what Black Partridge

says, and maybe they will send some of their friends to us."

They dared not disobey the chieftain, whose will at times was imperious. With heavy hearts they pushed the boat clear of the shore, and Jethro took up the paddle.

"Good-by," he called as he dipped the blade, and the craft began moving slowly to the south. Black Partridge made no reply, and the last sight of him in the gloom showed him standing in the same spot, as if he were in a troubled frame of mind. Jethro continued using the paddle, until they had passed well beyond sight of the keen vision of the Pottawatomie. Then he stopped his work and said in a low, almost tremulous voice:

"Auric, I don't like this at all."

"Neither do I, but what can we do? Black Partridge has shown himself the best of friends, and he will be angry if we disobey him."

"What right has he to interfere when no one else has objected? Mr. Kinzie gave me permission to meet you and he expects me to bring you back; your father was willing you should come, and, even if the Pottawatomie is a big chief, he is not our master."

"But father did not know as much about this business as he; if he did he never would have let me come; he wasn't willing in the first place."

"Mr. Kinzie understands everything."

"You can't be sure of that, but, all the same, it is cowardly for us to stay away from Fort Dearborn, when they will need every man they can get."

"Well, what do you say? It's Wayne or Dearborn; we must make up our minds."

Auric hesitated and looked back in the gloom.

"I wonder if there's any way we can get there without Black Partridge finding it out, while we are on the road."

"I can paddle so far out on the lake that he won't see us, or we can land and go afoot."

"I don't like either way; fact is, we can't tell what is the best to do."

"He spoke of our getting help from Fort Wayne; perhaps he wants us to do that."

"If it wasn't so far off we might, though it doesn't seem to me that if the whole garrison went to Dearborn they could be of much assistance, if the fort is to be given up. Before they can travel the distance it would be too late."

"If Black Partridge thought anything of the kind could be done, why didn't *he* make the trip himself? He can travel faster than we, and every hour counts."

The rebellious mood of the boys was increasing. Jethro kept dallying with his paddle, but took care not to propel the canoe any farther to the southward. All he wanted was an encouraging word from his companion.

"If we start inland we shall be likely to run into those Winnebagoes," suggested Auric, who was of different minds with the passing minutes.

"Don't let us do it then; I'll make the circuit out on the lake and keep off shore till there's no danger of meeting him: what do you say?"

"I can't feel right in turning back, and I shrink from making the chief angry; I would offer a different plan."

"What is that?"

"Paddle to where we left him and urge him to let us go on; we didn't say half what we ought to have said, when he objected."

"Suppose he forbids us again?"

"Then we'll decide for ourselves."

"Very well."

With one sweep of the paddle, Jethro circled the canoe around so as to head the other way, and it took but a minute or two to reach the spot where they had parted from the Pottawatomie. But he was gone. His canoe being also absent told the story.

"We'll follow so slowly that we won't overtake him," suggested Jethro, resuming their progress at a more moderate pace.

"Hark! I hear some one."

He who was paddling the approaching canoe did so with such careless vigor that he was plainly heard.

Jethro checked his boat, and a minute or two later Black Partridge emerged from the obscurity. The instant he recognized them he said:

"My sons shall go with me to Fort Dearborn."

The three set out, and pressed on with such perseverance that on the morrow all arrived safely at the imperilled fort.

CHAPTER XI

THE CRISIS

THE pleasantry is sometimes heard in Chicago that the first white man who settled on the site of that city was a negro. He was Pointe De Sable, a fugitive San Domingo slave, who, away back in 1779, built a cabin of square logs at the mouth of the Chicago, and spent several years in trapping. He was bought out or "jumped" by Le Mai, a Frenchman, who disposed of his property in 1804 to John H. Kinzie. A tract six miles square was ceded by the Indians to our government, and was claimed by both the English and French. On this tract was built Fort Dearborn, thus named in honor of General Henry Dearborn of New Hampshire, who distinguished himself by a daring charge at Monmouth, in 1778, and in 1813 captured Yorktown and Fort George in Canada. Fort Dearborn was erected in 1804.

A weedy streamlet flowed eastward past the fort, turning sharply to the right, and made its weak way by a shallow, fordable ripple over a long sand bar into the lake a half mile to the southward. On the river bank stood the United States agency warehouse.

Across the river, a little to the eastward, was the old Kinzie home. A canoe was moored to the bank opposite the house. When one wished to visit the fort he paddled across; when he desired to go the other way he hallooed for the boat.

Next to the Kinzie house was the Duillemette cabin, and still farther that of John Burns. Opposite the latter crude structure a swampy branch entered the river from the south, and on the sides of this branch was a group of Indian wigwams. All on the northern shore of the river was woods, except a few garden patches. The forks of the stream were visible a mile to the westward, but the intervening trees prevented the tracing of the branches.

Fort Dearborn at the mouth of the Chicago had a garrison of fifty-three soldiers, under the command of Captain Nathan Heald, with several families. Lieutenant Helm was a brave officer, who did not agree with many of his captain's views, but loyally supported him. A scalping party of Winnebagoes raided the little settlement near Chicago in April and killed several persons, but nothing of moment took place during the following three months. Hundreds of Indians were gathered about the fort, and there was continual passing in and out and to and fro. Few of the whites failed to read the sinister signs in the conduct and demeanor of the redskins. Some of the warriors dropped a threat now and then, and the

squaws who visited the different homes were often impudent. In more than one instance they stole articles before the eyes of the owners, and when compelled to restore them sullenly replied that they would soon own everything in the houses.

It has been said that a friendly Pottawatomie runner arrived at the fort on August 7 with a letter from General Hull at Detroit to Captain Nathan Heald, the commandant. When the latter opened and read the despatch he found it contained an official notice of the declaration of war between England and the United States, the news of the capture of Mackinaw, and an order to the captain to evacuate the fort, which was too far advanced on the frontier to be held against the attack that was certain soon to be made upon it. He was also directed to distribute the United States property among the Indians gathered in the neighborhood.

The letter was handed to Captain Heald in his own quarters. Before reading it he invited the messenger to be seated; but he declined, and remained standing while the officer was examining the despatch. When it was completed the captain looked up and asked:

"Do you know what this letter says?"

The Pottawatomie, who had a fair knowledge of English, nodded.

"What is it?"

"Big war between English and Americans; Father

at Detroit tell son here go way from fort; knowed big war before," replied the Indian, with a shadowy grin.

Captain Heald sent for Mr. Kinzie and Lieutenant Helm. No one understood Indian nature as well as the trader, and the commandant wished to consult with him. Being familiar with most of the Indian dialects spoken by the visiting tribes, his help was also valuable in a consultation of the kind the officer had in view.

When the three white men and single Indian were gathered in the small room of the fort which was headquarters, the captain read the letter aloud.

"What do you think of it, Kinzie?"

"I do not fully understand your question."

"I refer to the wisdom of our abandoning the fort, as General Hull orders me to do."

Instead of replying directly, the trader passed the question to the Pottawatomie, speaking in his native tongue:

"Do you think it wise for all these people to march out of the fort and go away?"

"It will not do."

"Why not?"

"There are hundreds of Indians around the post, waiting for the soldiers and white folks to leave; then they will break in and plunder."

"We shall care nothing for that, because we expect

them to do it when we give up the place, and the property is to be turned over to them."

"You will try to carry away much goods and food and supplies in the wagons and on the back of the horses; the Indians will take all that from you, for when you get out on the open plain you will not be able to defend yourselves; then they will kill every one of you!"

"What is your counsel?"

"That the soldiers stay in the fort; they have cannon and guns and plenty of powder; they can keep off twice as many Indians as Major Gladwyn did at Detroit, when Pontiac tried to drive him out."

"Your words are wise; I think as you do."

Kinzie now turned to the waiting officers and summed up the views of the Pottawatomie.

"No one is better qualified to speak than he; what he says about his countrymen is true, and I say to you, as I said to him, that I think as he does."

"What is your view, Mr. Helm?" asked the captain, turning to the younger officer, who, like the other visitor, had sat down on one of the half-dozen stools in the place, though the Pottawatomie remained standing with his keen black eyes fixed upon the faces of the others. His knowledge of English enabled him to keep the run of the conversation in which no one was more interested than he.

Now, Lieutenant Helm fully understood his superior

officer. There had been mutterings among the men, and much discontent with the course of Captain Heald, who was a stickler for discipline and the obedience of orders, though he failed to drill his soldiers as thoroughly as prudence called for. Helm knew that the captain was disposed to do as directed by General Hull, and it would be the hardest kind of work to dissuade him. The stress was such that the junior spoke with unusual directness.

"I can see no room for a moment's doubt, sir."

"Explain yourself."

"When Mr. Kinzie and a friendly Indian, of such intelligence as this one clearly is, agree upon a question of policy, it ought to be final. I refer, of course, to our relations with the Indians. Besides that, you have the highest authority for declining to follow the orders of General Hull."

"To what authority do you refer?"

"Official notices have been sent by the War Department, forbidding the surrender of any post to the enemy so long as it is capable of defence."

This was a home thrust, and it was clear that the captain felt it. He crossed his legs, swinging one foot to and fro, hummed softly, glanced from one face to the other, and then up at the square logs which formed the ceiling. He compressed his lips, frowned as if puzzled, then unfolded and read the despatch again, as if he expected to find something there that had

escaped him until that moment. Deliberately refolding it, he said in his low, decisive voice:

"General Hull is my immediate superior officer."

"Does not the Secretary of War rank him?" asked Lieutenant Helm.

"Yes, but in the present circumstances I must obey General Hull."

"That being your decision, sir, may I urge that it be done at once?"

The question was asked by Kinzie, who had been prepared for the words of the officer.

Before Captain Heald could reply the trader asked the opinion of the Pottawatomie, who agreed with him emphatically.

"Is there special need of haste?" inquired the captain.

"There is the utmost need; your intention, I suppose, is to march the garrison across the country to Fort Wayne?"

"That is the most desirable course; it is hardly two hundred miles."

"The danger would be imminent if it were only one tenth as great; by abandoning the post at once we shall gain a fair start. The Indians will take two or three days to plunder the fort and our dwellings, during which we can be making all haste southward along the head of the lake and across the country. If we delay and dilly-dally we shall become involved

in trouble with them, and the result can only be irretrievable disaster to us and our families."

"The order from General Hull requires me to distribute all the United States property among the Indians at the post. It seems to me that by doing that we shall gain their good-will, especially if we use judgment."

The Pottawatomie caught the meaning of this remark. He uttered an exclamation, and, walking abruptly to the window, looked out on the parade ground. He saw the American banner drooping languidly in the hot sun on the flagstaff, the palisades and the sentinels at their posts, while warriors were straggling in and out of the open gate as if no shadow of danger brooded over the fort, its garrison, and the women and children.

The three men smiled at one another, as if they did not understand the meaning of the Winnebago's action. Kinzie, however, knew.

"When he shows his displeasure in that manner, and you have the order of the War Department that no fort shall be surrendered without battle having been given, permit me to say, captain, that your hesitation is without warrant."

Captain Heald's face flushed, for he was not accustomed to being addressed in this manner. The trader did so because the circumstances warranted it.

"The question is a grave one," said the officer,

quietly; "the abandonment of the fort is no slight matter. I shall not decide until I have considered it further. I must say, however, that the Indians need not necessarily think we have reached the decision through fear of them."

"How shall we prevent it, sir?" asked Lieutenant Helm.

"It can be shown that it is against our wishes, but in obedience to the orders of the Great Father at Detroit, who wishes us to join him."

The Pottawatomie was still standing at the small window, with his back toward the group, but his face was turned sideways, in order to catch every word. Kinzie saw the profile against the sunlight beyond, and noted the scornful expression. The redskin understood the words of the superior officer and disdained to make comment.

Lieutenant Helm managed to hide his disgust. He knew that further protest was idle and he determined to make none. It was clear that Captain Heald had decided not only to obey the orders of General Hull, but he would commit the fatal mistake of waiting several days before doing so. This would give full time for the Indians to consider every phase of the business and their discontent would grow.

"Am I excused, sir?" asked Helm.

The captain nodded, the junior saluted and withdrew.

"I don't see that there is any call for me to remain, captain," said Kinzie, "as I gather from what you have said that you will surrender the fort to the Indians?"

"I have not fully decided, but I do not see my way to refuse."

"I have many preparations to make, for I must look after the safety of my own family, but I am happy to serve you at all times."

"Thank you, Mr. Kinzie; I know I can depend on you; I need not tell you that I appreciate your services, which are above those any one else can give."

The trader now saluted in turn, and, passing out of the building, strode thoughtfully across the parade ground, out of the gate, and down the slope to the edge of the stream, where he had left his canoe when summoned by the commanding officer. He paddled hurriedly across and to his own home, where his wife, little boy and girl awaited his coming.

Captain Heald was left alone with the dusky messenger. The latter remained standing in the attitude described, except that he had turned his face and was looking out of the window again, as if he felt no interest in anything else. The captain glanced at him and asked in a kindly voice:

"What is your name?"

"Red Feather," was the gruff reply, without movement of head or body.

"You have done well, Red Feather, in bringing this letter so far through the woods from Detroit; will you carry one back to the Great Father, General Hull?"

The Pottawatomie nodded.

"It will take me only a few minutes to write it: I wish you would sit down, Red Feather; will you smoke?"

"No smoke — me stand," replied the warrior, who resumed his former pose.

Captain Heald raised the lid of his small, wooden desk and took out several sheets of old-fashioned blue foolscap. Upon one of these he wrote a few lines in ink, folded it over and sealed it with sealing wax. Envelopes were comparatively unknown in those days, and the last side of each sheet was unruled, the better to serve for the address. When this had been written, he sprinkled some black sand from a sort of pepper box, shook the missive so as to release the particles that did not adhere to the damp ink, and they were dropped back into the box. Then he drew from his pocket several American gold coins, which he handed to the Indian, as he came forward.

"I shall be greatly obliged to you, Red Feather, if you will deliver this letter to General Hull at Detroit. It will take you four or five days to make the journey, but there is no special haste; I merely tell him that his despatches have been placed in my hands by

the faithful Red Feather and his orders will be obeyed."

The face of the messenger was as expressionless as a piece of wood, and he did not speak. Taking the letter, he shoved it into a receptacle within his hunting shirt, which seemed to have been fashioned for some such use, picked up his rifle from where he had leaned it in the corner, and strode out of the little building. Captain Heald with a smile called "Good-by" to him, but Red Feather did not seem to hear him. The officer rose from his chair, and passed to the window where the Pottawatomie had stood for several minutes, and looked out. He smiled again when he saw the stalwart figure stalking across the parade ground and out of the gate. On the way he met several of his countrymen, and more than one spoke to him. From his manner he was as unwilling to address them as the commandant, for he did not change his stride and speedily passed from sight.

"They are a strange people," mused Captain Heald, "some of them are devils themselves; but that faithful fellow will push straight on around the lake and across the country, hardly pausing to eat or sleep, till he places my letter in the hands of General Hull. He won't stop for heat or cold or storm or anything else."

Let us see whether he did.

Red Feather kept on, apparently with the grim resolve that Captain Heald supposed was in his heart.

He did not look to the right or left, but only in front. He acted as if following a well-marked trail, so familiar to him that his speed would not slacken when night shut in. Not until he was well clear of his people and far in the woods did Red Feather stop. Then he paused as abruptly as if he had caught a signal from his chieftain.

It was on the edge of a sluggish streamlet, across which he could leap with only half an effort. He did not do so, but again leaned his gun against a support, which in this instance was a small hickory sapling. Then he drew the blue paper from his pocket, and held it up for a few seconds, as if to make sure there was no mistake as to its identity. Unconsciously the expression on his coppery countenance became more contemptuous.

And then the Pottawatomie slowly and deliberately tore the letter into fine strips! He looked upon the gold which he had accepted from Captain Heald as payment for bringing him the despatch from General Hull. No sum could induce him to take the answer to the general.

The action and manner of Red Feather said as clearly as so many words:

"If Captain Heald is a fool there is no need of my tramping all the way to Detroit to tell the same to General Hull; if he is acquainted with Captain Heald, he learned it long ago."

When the messenger had reduced the carefully sealed letter to fragments he held them in one hand, as if to enjoy the sight, and then tossed the pieces into the streamlet which flowed at his feet. His next act was characteristic. He faced squarely about and walked back over his own trail toward Fort Dearborn. Translating again the meaning of his action it would be:

"Soon there will be much plunder to be divided among the people; Red Feather must be on the spot that he may receive his share."

CHAPTER XII

COMPANIONS IN PERIL

Such was the critical situation at Fort Dearborn, when Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd, under the escort of Black Partridge, the leading Pottawatomie chief, arrived at the place.

The Kinzie home was the largest and most imposing dwelling outside the fort. It had been enlarged and made comfortable by the trader, who prospered during his dealings with the Indians, many of whom brought their peltries from long distances to exchange them for supplies with the one man who never cheated them, and who, it may be added, was rarely or never cheated by them. He knew their ways, spoke several of their dialects, and could be firm as well as kind. Such men, if given opportunity, never fail to win the respect and friendship of the Indians, who naturally distrust the race that has swindled them from the beginning.

Along the front of the house extended a broad, covered porch, enclosed by a railing, while the roomy yard in front, which reached almost to the water's edge, contained a number of shade trees that gave

the home a cool, grateful appearance during these sultry days, when men and animals panted from the heat. Kinzie was as popular with his own race as with the Indians, and when matters were quiet his home was a favorite resort for Captain Heald and the officers of the garrison, in addition to the surgeon and civilian neighbors.

Black Partridge left his young friends before they crossed the stream, and the boys by themselves entered the home where they were received with the warmest welcome. Mrs. Kinzie, matronly sweet and genial, kissed each lad, who looked up to her as affectionately as if she were their own mother, while the boys and girls, four in number, and all younger than Auric and Jethro, climbed over them and shouted and danced with delight. The head of the house was busy with his clerk in the store, but was expected soon, for the day was drawing to a close. Mrs. Kinzie pressed the youths to eat, and, though they could have done so with right good appetite, they preferred waiting till the hour for the regular evening meal, when all would be together around the board, at which it generally happened some outside friend was present.

The boys frolicked with the children, told Mrs. Kinzie of their experience on the way thither, and anxiously inquired as to the situation and outlook. She knew almost as much as her husband, but thought it best to wait for him to talk with the lads, since he was

likely to bring additional news. Every passing hour gave some new phase to a situation that could not have been more delicate and threatening.

You would have thought, could you have seen the party gathered around the spacious table, father, mother, four children, and the two sturdy youths, all laughing, chatting, and exchanging jests, that they were in the most peaceful and happy community in the world. And yet none except the smaller ones failed to know and to feel the gathering gloom, which was liable to emit its deadly bolt at any moment. Not until the children had been sent to their beds, and the trader had lit his long-stemmed pipe, was the momentous subject brought forward.

The night was so warm and the mosquitoes so troublesome that no candles or lamps were lit, and the company gathered in their chairs on the front porch. When the moon rose they could look across the stream, and up the gentle slope to the fort, where a few lights twinkled, and a faint view of the flagstaff, with its limp and motionless bunting, was seen like a thin black line drawn against the sky beyond. Still nearer, dark figures flitted to and fro, like shadows in the obscurity. Sometimes only two or three were visible, and then a score of phantom-like shapes glided across the field of vision. These were Indians, and who should guess the dark schemes and evil plans that were shaping in their brains?

"Boys," said the trader, who had Auric on his right and Jethro on his left, as he took the pipe from between his lips, "I suppose you think wife and I are glad to see you?"

"That's a strange thing to say, Mr. Kinzie," replied Jethro; "you know you and mother are half tickled to death because we are here."

"It is just the other way, my boys; I am downright sorry, and would give a good deal if you were both at Fort Wayne at this moment."

Jethro knew what these words meant. In fact, he had expected something of the kind, but he was just a trifle resentful.

"Black Partridge felt as you did at first; he ordered us to turn back when we were on our way here, but he changed his mind, and said we should come with him. He seems to have a better opinion of us than you."

"Hardly that," calmly replied the trader; "if there was the least chance of your being of any earthly use I should not think as I do, but there isn't."

"Suppose Captain Heald had fifty or a hundred more like us?" suggested Auric.

"But he hasn't and he can't have, so what's the use of supposing anything of the kind? Captain Heald has decided to evacuate the fort and distribute the property among these Indians, who know the whole truth and are clamoring for the plunder. Besides,

other warriors are continually coming in, and there are enough now to massacre every one of us, including the whole garrison; your coming has simply added two more probable victims to the slaughter."

"I feel as John does," said Mrs. Kinzie, gravely.

"You forget how *we* should feel, if we were not with you when the danger comes," added Jethro in a choking voice; "I should never forgive myself if anything happened to you or the children while we were at a safe distance; mother, I'm ready to die for you."

And the impulsive lad sprang from his chair, threw his arms around the neck of the good woman, and sobbed like a child.

"There! there! my dear boy," she replied, fondling the head, and speaking in a voice that required all her self-control to prevent breaking; "you must not feel that way; it is because we love you and Auric so much that we are distressed. Where do you suppose your father would wish you to be at this time?"

"Just where we are!" was the impetuous reply, as Jethro mastered his grief, and raised his head from her shoulder; "he would despise me as much as I should myself, if he thought I was such a coward as to run away."

"And that's just the way *my* father would feel," said Auric, laying his hand on the knee of the trader, who had resumed the thoughtful smoking of his pipe.

"Does he know of this danger?"

"He heard it before I left home."

"He could hardly know all; but it is too late now to undo what has been done; I expect Captain Heald here this evening, and we shall learn more of his plans; I am sure we shall find some place where both of you can be of use."

The words were hardly spoken when a halloo was heard from the other bank. All recognized the voice, and saw the form of the commandant standing on the farther side of the stream.

"I will bring him over," exclaimed Auric, springing from his chair and hurrying off the porch and down the slope. He was plainly seen as he paddled across and started immediately on his return with the captain, who came up on the porch a few minutes later, and greeted the little party. After a few conventional words, Mr. Kinzie asked:

"Well, captain, are there any new developments?"

"Nothing, except the Indians seem to be more restless and soured than ever."

"That is to be expected; you have fully decided to abandon the post and start for Fort Wayne?"

"Nothing else remains for me to do."

"How soon do you propose to leave?"

"As soon as we can make ready; it will take several days to make our arrangements; I shall call a council of the Indians and explain my plans to them."

"You cannot move too promptly, captain; their

temper will not improve with the delay. I am sure you recognize the importance of doing two things."

"What are they?"

"You must not leave any firearms or ammunition for them; they are too well armed as it is; when a redskin holds a gun in his hand his first impulse is to do some deviltry with it. More important than that is the destruction of all the whiskey you have; you know too well the effects of drunkenness among them. One drink of the stuff will turn a friendly warrior into a demon, and the squaws, if anything, are ten times worse than the men."

"Your counsel is good; I have discussed the question with my officers, and we all think as you do."

"And the destruction of the alcohol must be as secret as possible, for they will be in a rage when they find out they have been robbed of that which they value above everything else in the world."

"All you say shall be remembered; may I ask, Mr. Kinzie, what you intend to do with your family?"

"I shall place Mrs. Kinzie and the children in a boat and send them around the head of the lake to St. Joseph, where they will await the arrival of the soldiers."

"You will have an escort for them?"

"I have selected two Pottawatomies who can be trusted; they will act as protectors, in addition to the

boatmen; I am hopeful that they will be allowed to pass out of the river unmolested."

"You are so widely and favorably known that I am sure you have little to fear; you speak their language and understand their nature."

"You talk, captain, as if I were going with them."

"You are a civilian and have nothing to do with military matters; it is your duty to look after your family."

"That cannot be gainsaid, but I shall stay with you all the same."

"You see, captain," interposed Mrs. Kinzie in her soft voice, "we shall not need John with us, for we shall be just as safe without as with him; but, if he stays with you, he may be able to restrain the Indians from harming the others."

"That is my view," said the husband; "wife and I have decided the question."

Auric and Jethro were listening closely to every word. The former feared a veto by the captain, and presumed to break into the conversation at this point.

"It must be as the captain and mother have just said; the family in the boat will need no more guard than has been hired; for, if the Indians mean to attack, the presence of two or three more will not prevent it; you will need every gun and man; Mr. Kinzie and Jethro and I ought to be of some help to you."

The shadow in the porch prevented any one seeing

the smile which for a moment lit up the face of the grim soldier.

"You are a couple of plucky youngsters, but I cannot say that I am surprised; with Mr. Kinzie's permission, I will accept your services."

"We settled *that* with him some time ago," said Jethro, promptly.

"Then it is settled with me, though I must say I should feel better if both of you were at Fort Wayne, or a good many miles from here."

The captain had too many duties pressing upon him to prolong his call. He rose from his seat, courteously bade all good night, excepting the trader himself, who passed down the walk with him to paddle the visitor across the stream. When the couple reached the other side, both sat still for a few minutes and talked in low tones.

"Captain, would it not be wise for you and Lieutenant Helm to entrust your wives with the guard that will take charge of my family?"

"Nothing would suit me better, but neither of them will consent to leave us; you know the kind of wives they are; they will insist upon sharing the fate of their husbands, even if they knew we both should be killed."

"It is the same with Mrs. Kinzie; and yet this case is somewhat different, for she hopes, as do I, that my presence among the Indians may prove of some good to the rest of you; depend upon it, I shall do my utmost,

but, we may as well admit to each other, captain, that the chances of the garrison being allowed to march to Fort Wayne without attack is hardly one in ten thousand."

"I am afraid you are right, Kinzie," replied the commandant, gloomily, as he looked off in the moonlight toward the fort. The shadowy figures were moving to and fro, and the whole assemblage of white as well as red men was seething with excitement. Momentous events were at hand.

CHAPTER XIII

A WARNING CALL

Captain Heald carried out his intention of holding a council with the leading Indians, who had gathered around Fort Dearborn, and were impatient for the division of the property among them. It had been known for several days that the garrison intended to march out of the post, and with their families pass around the head of the lake and across the country to Fort Wayne, some two hundred miles distant. How the news became known so soon, the captain would have found it hard to explain, for he and his brother officers and soldiers carefully kept the secret. Perhaps Red Feather had something to do with the betrayal, though he might have been counted on to keep his lips sealed, but for the disgust caused by Captain Heald's refusal to follow his advice and that of his friends.

It looked as if all the hundreds of Indians around the post were assembled to listen to the words of the captain, who never essayed a more delicate task. It was in the afternoon and the weather was oppressively sultry. On the plain in front of the fort, near the

inviting shadows of the woods, the commandant faced the surly multitude, none of whom sat on the ground, while he addressed them. There was hardly a warrior present whose ugly face was not smeared with different colored paint. The only relief the commandant felt when he looked around was the sight of Black Partridge, standing only a few paces distant and gazing with an expectant, friendly expression in his countenance. If he had had any paint on his features, it was washed off, and he stood clean — that is for an Indian, which, after all, is not saying much.

The pleasure that Captain Heald might have felt at the sight of this friend in the repellent horde was somewhat dampened by sight of a warrior standing several paces behind him, occasionally exchanging words in a low voice with a villainous buck at his elbow. The officer recognized the former, despite the fact that his face had been painted since he saw him a few days before. He was Red Feather, the messenger who had brought the order from General Hull at Detroit for the evacuation of Fort Dearborn. The disquieting fact that went with this recognition was the appearance of the Pottawatomie at Dearborn, when, if he had kept his promise, he would have been a hundred or more miles to the eastward on his way to Detroit.

Captain Heald could think of only one explanation of Red Feather's presence at this time in the

scowling, turbulent group. He had deliberately turned traitor and was waiting for his chance to join in the looting of the fort and the massacre.

But the commandant had little time in which to give thought to the matter. As he looked around into the ugly visages, a third of whom were squaws, he saw little to encourage him. In that moment he must have recalled the advice of Red Feather, Mr. Kinzie, and his own officers, and realized that he had made a grievous mistake, — but it was too late now to retrieve it.

Addressing the multitude, he explained that General Hull at Detroit had sent him a message by one of their best warriors, that he wished the garrison to go to Fort Wayne; but, in doing so, the kind Father, of whom all had heard, had told him to distribute, as proof of his good will, all the property at the fort among them. It would give the commandant pleasure to turn this over to the friends he saw before him. It would be handed to the leaders, and they would divide it among the others, as was just and right. In return, he would ask for an escort of several hundred warriors to Fort Wayne. He took pains to assure them that on their arrival at that post all the members of the escort would receive a liberal reward for their services. There was no reason why there should be delay in the division of the property, which he was now prepared to make.

The soldiers, as instructed, brought forth the goods and began their distribution. There was a large quantity of blankets, broadcloth, calicoes, prints, etc., worth several hundred dollars. A wild scramble would have immediately followed, that would have developed into rioting, but for the firmness of the chiefs. Black Partridge and several others rose to the occasion and compelled something in the nature of order. Leaving them to themselves, Captain Heald passed through the gate, which was closed behind him, and, thoughtful and much disturbed in mind, went to his quarters.

The most important work remained to be done: that was the destruction of the firearms and whiskey. That night all the liquors were thrown into the river, including the ammunition, except twenty-five rounds and one box of cartridges to a man. Then the spare muskets and gun-fixtures were broken up and flung into the well of the fort.

Dearborn had such a large stock of whiskey on hand that when the barrels were staved in and the spirits poured into the water, the pungent fumes could be detected a long way off. Guided by their noses, several warriors located the stuff, which so impregnated the stream, over a space of several rods, that it resembled the beverage which a toper imbibes when he chooses not to take it "straight." They drank deeply, and called it good grog. If they swallowed

more water than that to which they were accustomed, they also disposed of a greater quantity of liquor. The singular result was seen of a score of warriors, and about as many squaws, staggering to and fro in a maudlin condition, while others showed the effects of their indulgence. Soon there was a general flocking of the Indians to the river, but the alcohol had become so much diluted by this time that its potency weakened and soon disappeared.

The secret of the breaking up of the muskets and their tossing into the well was easily kept, but the destruction of the alcohol was not. Those who got none were angered, and those who got only a taste were equally angry because they got no more. The Indians felt that they had been outrageously cheated, and, far from being satisfied by the presents of cloth and trinkets, they were enraged because they were deprived of that which they valued far more. It was a good thing that the whiskey had been destroyed, but a bad thing that it became known. The peril which already impended over the garrison and the civilians became more imminent than ever.

Late that night, Black Partridge presented himself at the gate of Fort Dearborn. He was so well known that there was no hesitation in admitting him, for Captain Heald had given orders that every courtesy should be shown the Pottawatomie chieftain. He professed to be a friend of the white people, and thus

far had conducted himself as such. He was the most influential sachem among all the Indians present, and the importance of keeping his good-will could not be overestimated. When, therefore, he asked to be conducted to the commandant, he was taken at once to his quarters. Captain Heald at the time was in consultation with his surgeon and Lieutenant Helm. When the erect chieftain appeared at the door, which was opened by the orderly, he received a warm welcome.

Black Partridge stood on the threshold for a moment, and looked grimly into the faces of the little group. He did not speak, but all suspected the meaning of the haughty expression on his face.

"Do you wish to see me alone, Black Partridge?" asked the commandant.

As you know, the chieftain possessed a fair knowledge of English, which, as before, we shall take the liberty of putting in shape. The two had no trouble in understanding each other, but the sentences of the aboriginal American were broken and disjointed.

"Black Partridge would speak into his brother's ears."

The commandant glanced at his friends, who rose to their feet, saluted and passed out, strolling to the quarters of Lieutenant Helm, there to continue the discussion in which they were engaged when checked by the Pottawatomie leader.

All the men had been smoking. Although the windows were open on the oppressive night, the smoke still lingered, refusing to dissolve in the clearer air. A small lamp on a table in the middle of the room diffused a yellow illumination. Despite the impurity of the atmosphere, Captain Heald discovered a suggestive fact in the same moment that his dusky visitor stepped across the threshold: it was the odor of alcohol, which Black Partridge brought with him. Sharing the weakness of his race, he had been in the scramble for the wasted whiskey, and had secured enough, even in its diluted state, to betray itself.

But the sachem was sober. His had been the weakened stuff, which added to his thirst instead of satisfying it. Naturally reticent, its effect was to make him glummer than usual. It was clear he was in no amiable mood.

When the door had been closed behind Black Partridge, Captain Heald waved his hand to the chair which Lieutenant Helm had vacated.

"Let my brother be seated; I am always glad to have him come to see me."

The Pottawatomie did not stir, but stood like a statue, looking fixedly at the commandant. His left hand clasped the barrel of his rifle, whose stock rested on the floor, while his right toyed with the silver medal, which, as you remember, he was excessively proud to

Black Partridge and Captain Heald *Page* 150

wear over his breast, supported by a string about his neck. He stood silent so long that the officer repeated his invitation.

Without speaking, he walked slowly forward. While doing so, he deftly slipped the thong over his head, and handed his medal to Captain Heald.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the astonished officer, as he took the token.

"I give it to my brother."

A thrill went through the heart of the commandant, for he understood the significance of the act.

"I cannot take it, Black Partridge; it was sent to you by the Great Father at Washington, because he was told you were a mighty chief and the friend of the white men; he would be angry with me were he told that I had dared to accept it from you; take it back and wear it on your breast as you have done for years."

The chief recoiled a step and shook his head.

"The friendship between Black Partridge and the Americans has been warm, and, as my brother says, it has lasted for many moons; but the time has come when I can no longer restrain my young men from shedding blood. I cannot wear this medal as a friend, when I am an enemy."

The chief now gravely accepted the chair that had been offered him, but he sat as erect as ever and did not take his eyes from the face of the commandant,

who could not wholly hide his emotion. It was a time for plain words.

"Do you mean that you have become an *enemy* to the Americans? Are you going to fight on the side of the English in this war that has come upon us?"

"No, no, no," replied the chieftain, angrily; "Black Partridge will *never* fight for those who come across the great water to kill the Americans."

"If you are an enemy, you *must* do so; if you do not, then you are our friend."

The chieftain now lifted quite a load from the heart of the commandant, by explaining the meaning of his alarming words. He must appear as the enemy of the Americans; as he said, his young men had passed beyond his control; if he should resist them openly, his life would not be worth a minute's purchase; perhaps he could do nothing to help the Americans, but, if a fair opportunity offered, he would try to remember he was their friend.

While this peculiar position on the part of the Pottawatomie leader was far better than that of open enmity, it brought little comfort to Captain Heald. In the first place he had a suspicion of the honesty of the sachem. He was sullen and resentful over the destruction of the whiskey; he knew it was done by the orders of the commandant and he knew *why* it was done.

If Black Partridge had decided to become a foe

because of this he would not deny himself the pleasure of telling the captain of his danger. He knew the officer was in great distress of mind, and, Indian-like, wished to add to that distress. It certainly cost the chieftain a pang thus to let his loved medal pass from his possession, but it was a part of the scheme he had formed, whose real nature must be left for the immediate future to reveal.

"I will keep your medal for you, Black Partridge, and when we reach Fort Wayne, or before, if you wish it, I will give it back to you."

"You and the soldiers will *never* reach Fort Wayne!" said the chieftain with impressive solemnity.

"Well, then, if I am killed — and it looks very much that way — you will find it on my body, and when you do that, Black Partridge, you will think of me as one who was once your friend."

Whether the chieftain was touched by this sentiment or not he was too much of an Indian to show it. Without seeming to have heard the words he asked crisply:

"Why did not my brother keep his promise to the Pottawatomies and Winnebagoes?"

"In what did I fail to keep my promise?"

"My brother said he would give all the property of the United States to their chiefs to divide among the warriors and squaws."

"Did I not do so?"

"The fire-water has been poured into the river; it is all gone; — all wasted."

Captain Heald saw that his visitor was in full command of his senses, but felt ugly over the loss of his loved beverage.

"Suppose, Black Partridge, I had given the fire-water to your warriors; when they had drank it all, what would they do to *us?* Would one of our lives be spared? Would they show any mercy to our women and children?"

"That has naught to do with it; my brother should have kept his pledge; Black Partridge always does so."

"It seemed to me wise that I should not give them the fire-water; you know how much ill it has done your people; they would be much better if they had never tasted it."

"It was the white men who first gave it to them; then, when the red men learned to love the drink that robs them of their wits, the white men take it from them; they have no right to do that when we have learned to like it; they should give it to the chiefs, that they might drink and be filled."

Captain Heald could not repress a smile.

"There are no more than a dozen chiefs at Fort Dearborn; do you think you and they could drink *all* the fire-water?"

The entrancing vision thus held out was almost too much for the dignity of the Pottawatomie leader.

The prospect of an unlimited supply of whiskey, especially after he had got a taste of it, was like a glimpse of paradise.

"We could drink it *all*," he said decisively; "all we should ask is that you would give us time — a *little* time."

"It would have taken a good deal of time, but if your warriors are beyond control now, how would you keep the whiskey from them? It was not you and the other chiefs that we feared, but your warriors."

The peculiarity of the conditions, however, forbade the chief being satisfied. Saying nothing more of account, he took his departure.

But he left his prize silver medal behind.

CHAPTER XIV

UP STREAM

During these days when the shadow that hung over Fort Dearborn steadily deepened, Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd made their home with the Kinzies, whose hospitality was known for hundreds of miles through the surrounding wilderness. No matter who crossed that threshold, be he white, red, or black, he was sure of a warm welcome and the best the house could give. The name of the trader, who spoke with a single tongue and never cheated an Indian or white man, who often gave favors to those who he knew were unworthy, who never allowed a person to go away hungry or lacking for clothing, was spoken in the depths of the wintry desolation far to the northward beyond the Saskatchewan, or among the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains. And none who knew the good man failed to speak more reverently and tenderly of the sweet woman that had been his companion and helpmate throughout so many years.

Every one was aware that the trader had prospered. He was wealthy as the times went, and no one grudged him his good fortune. Surely none deserved it more.

As we remember, he spoke the dialects of most of the Indians who found their way to his roomy storehouse, and when the visitor sometimes came from so remote a point as Hudson Bay, and his language was unintelligible, the trader was not at a loss, for the sign language was universal.

These facts being borne in mind, it will be seen how naturally Kinzie's influence among the red men surpassed that of any other member of his race. The trader could not but know it himself, and, when he decided to stay with the garrison, he had good reason for believing he would be of great help to them. His wife saw the likelihood of this as clearly as he, and, though it caused a pang, she commended his action. So, while the preparations were under way for closing up the storehouse and sending the family to St. Joseph, the policy of the head and the two youths was not discussed; for it had been settled.

On the advice of Mr. Kinzie, Auric and Jethro kept pretty closely to the house most of the time. They aided in the preparations and made themselves helpful, to the delight of the children with whom both were favorites, because of their rollicking, fun-loving tempers. The weather continued hot and dry, and only the warriors and squaws seemed indifferent to the flaming rays at midday.

The trader estimated the number of Indians in the neighborhood as seven or eight hundred. They were

mostly Winnebagoes and Pottawatomies, but among them were a few belonging to other tribes, whose identity even the trader was sometimes at a loss to determine. It boded evil when they took pains to hide their nationality. It happened more than once that, when addressed directly by the merchant, they either did not understand his words or pretended not to understand them. When Kinzie inquired from some of his swarthy friends, they also professed ignorance.

"If they were honest," thought the trader, "there would be no need of this mystery; they are up to deviltry."

If there had been any doubt in his mind it was removed by what he saw on the same day that Captain Heald held his council with the Indians. Two of these strangers came into his store to buy powder. They were dressed after the fashion of the other Indians, but, through some peculiar fancy, they used white paint, which was supplied only to the forehead and nose, the rest of the face being comparatively clean. This fancy made them look more hideous than usual, if such a thing can be supposed possible. Moreover, both of these warriors had unusually prominent cheek-bones, and retreating chins.

No other customers were in the store when the strangers entered. Kinzie's clerk stepped forward to wait upon them, when the trader quietly told him to stay in the background, and leave them to him.

In the same minute, Auric Kingdon came through the door after the customers, and, leaning against the farther end of the counter, with his elbow resting on a pile of musty furs, he studied the strangers with no little interest.

Kinzie was quick to understand what the couple wanted. Each carried a musket of excellent make, and their signs were intelligible. He shook his head, replying "I have no powder to sell." This was spoken in the tongue of the Pottawatomies, then of the Winnebagoes, and finally of the Miamis. To all, the warriors responded with a wide stare, and a negative shake of their heads.

"I guess you have run up against it," remarked Auric with a smile, as he watched proceedings; "they don't understand a word you say."

"They understand what I said as plainly as you do; I see through their trick."

"Why should they try that?" asked the astonished Auric.

"They mean mischief, and are afraid they will be punished; but they are from the Upper Wabash and I shall see that the Great Father at Washington is told all about them, that he may put them to death for their evil acts."

This remark was meant more for the visitors than for the youth. It was spoken in Pottawatomie, and Auric, who "caught on," could hardly repress a grin.

He and Mr. Kinzie closely watched the faces of the visitors, who had accepted the refusal of the trader to furnish them ammunition, as made by him in the sign language. You have seen the cigar signs carved in wood and painted to represent Indian warriors, which are not so popular in these days as they used to be. Their countenances were as expressive as those of the two disappointed customers.

Having said this much, the trader waited for the couple to withdraw, but they stood for some minutes staring around the large apartment, at the furs, cloths, trinkets, bows, arrows, powder-horns, bullet pouches, fishing tackle, and other things displayed on wall, shelf, counter, and wherever chance offered. There could be no objection to this, for they might see something which they wished to buy, and it was Mr. Kinzie's business to sell, or rather to barter, for little gold and silver circulated in his dealings.

Suddenly one of the strangers spoke to the trader. He showed considerable vivacity, and the intonation of his words was that of one asking questions. Instant to penetrate the artifice, the trader's bronzed face flushed with anger.

"You do not deceive me; you said nothing at all; you wished to make me think you did; you jumbled a lot of gibberish together, but I am no fool; I am speaking to you in Pottawatomie and you understand what I say; stay in my store no longer."

The visitors, if they comprehended the last command, were too cunning to show it. The merchant had no thought of using force, but an interesting complication threatened, when through the door which stood partly open, because of the warmth of the weather, a Winnebago Indian, also bearing a long rifle, entered. He was the miscreant Wag-ma-rah, than whom there was no more bloodthirsty wretch within a hundred miles of Fort Dearborn. He could dissemble when he chose, and the grin with which he glanced from the trader to his clerk, and then to the angry Auric, did not deceive any one of the three.

"Wag-ma-rah," said the merchant, sharply; "who are these men?"

The Winnebago looked keenly at them as if he had never seen either before. They in turn stared at him with stolid countenances. Each might have doubted the species to which the other belonged.

"Come," said the trader, impatiently; "you have met them before; they are not the only members of their tribe that are near Fort Dearborn; I think they are Miamis who have painted their faces this way, so that we shall not know them; their actions show that they understand everything I said to them. What is their tribe?"

Wag-ma-rah tried the couple in several dialects, to none of which they made response, but gazed as vapidly at the questioner as before.

With clerk, trader, and Auric keenly watching the visitors, they turned about and walked out of the store. As they did so, they passed so near Wag-ma-rah that the clothing of one of them grazed him. Neither spoke, and when the strangers crossed the threshold, they went in the direction of the fort, as if they had no further interest in the storehouse and its occupants.

They had hardly gone, when Wag-ma-rah followed, but, on the outside, he turned abruptly to the left, going toward a group of his own people, who had gathered a short distance off and were talking together.

"Did you notice anything, Auric?" asked the trader.

"If you mean when they passed so close to Wag-ma-rah, I must say I did."

"What was it?"

"Neither he nor they spoke, but there was a meaning glance between them, which may have meant a good deal."

"I saw it, though the faces of the couple were turned partly away; they not only understood every word spoken while they were here, but they and the Winnebago are companions in deviltry."

"Why did they come to the store?"

"They wanted powder."

"You have plenty."

"Not enough to sell any to the Indians."

At this juncture, Jethro Judd sauntered into the store and was told of the incident that had just occurred.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken," said he, "I saw Wag-ma-rah and that couple together just at dusk last evening. They were to the left of the parade ground, near the woods, and two or three others, belonging to the same tribe, were with them."

"I'm quite sure you are right, but possibly are mistaken as to this particular couple; I wish you and Auric would use your eyes, and learn all you can about this business; there are more of those Indians from a distance than Captain Heald or Lieutenant Helm, or any of the officers, suspect; the rest don't need others to stir them up to mischief, but I'm satisfied that that is just what is going on."

The youths welcomed this chance for doing a valuable service. Despite the restlessness among the many Indians in the neighborhood of the fort, nothing of an openly hostile nature had yet taken place, nor was it likely to take place for two or three days, or before the evacuation of the post.

The better to carry on their work, our young friends separated, agreeing to meet on the bank of the stream early in the evening to compare notes. It should be said that since their arrival at the post, both had met the treacherous Wag-ma-rah several times. Although neither party pretended to hide the truth from the other, the Winnebago assumed a friendliness, meant for others, for he knew the boys could not be deceived.

Little had been seen of Black Partridge. He was immersed in schemes of his own, though the surrender of his medal to Captain Heald caused grave fear on the part of Mr. Kinzie that it meant he had become an enemy who would strike as venomously as the others, when the outbreak came. The fact that he avoided the youths strengthened this misgiving on the part of the sagacious trader.

The moon was shining, though the night was young, when Jethro Judd came down to the stream at the point where he and his friend had left the canoe. A few minutes later, Auric strode forward, and the two paused on the river bank.

"What have you learned?" asked Auric.

"A canoe passed up stream a half hour ago."

"I saw it, but only Wag-ma-rah was in it."

"That was true at first, but I suspected he was up to something and I managed to keep him in sight till he reached the bend. Just beyond that he turned into shore, and five other Indians came out of the wood and stepped into the boat. I thought so many of them would sink it, but they didn't, and Wag-ma-rah paddled very slowly."

"Did you follow them farther?"

"No; I was running against some of the Indians all the time; they seem to be wandering everywhere and would have suspected what I was doing."

"What about Wag-ma-rah?"

"He wasn't looking for anything of the kind and didn't see me; but, if he had been expecting it, I must have been discovered. I thought best to come back and tell you what I had noticed."

"Mr. Kinzie told us to learn all we could, and it seems to me that the best thing we can do is to follow that canoe."

"We certainly can't do any good by staying here; we may dodge them if they are coming back, by running in close to shore."

"And even if we do meet them they will not dare to object; we have as much right to paddle in the stream at this time of night as they have. So get in and we'll be off."

Auric took his place at the stern of the boat that was used in passing between the Kinzie home and the fort, and Jethro laid his gun in the bottom, and began swinging the paddle, as he had done many a time in the past.

Jethro displayed his usual skill in propelling the canoe. The bright moonlight was unfavorable in some respects, for, although he kept close as he could to the shore, taking advantage of the ribbon of shadow that partly veiled the bank, he was often compelled to expose himself and companion. As has been shown, a good many Indians were abroad, and some of them must have observed the craft with its occupants. Once our young friends thought they

were to be compelled to give an account of themselves, for two brawny warriors suddenly appeared on the bank of the stream only a few rods distant. It was impossible to tell where they had come from. They seemed equally surprised at sight of the youths, at whom they stared for a brief interval in silence.

Meanwhile, Jethro kept steadily swaying the paddle, neither hurrying nor retarding his speed. Suddenly one of the men called in English:

"Where go? — Who be? — "

"We are your friends, who are taking a little run on this moonlit night."

Auric spoke in Pottawatomie, rightly suspecting that the couple belonged to that tribe. Evidently they were astonished, and, after a short silence, the warrior who had first spoken called in the same tongue that the youth had used:

"Let my sons come to land that we may talk with them."

"We haven't time now; we shall be glad to talk with you at the fort to-morrow."

Doubtful how the refusal would be accepted, Auric held his rifle ready for instant use. All parties were in such clear sight that the youth would have noted the first hostile movement on the part of the Pottawatomies and would have anticipated it. To his relief, however, the couple made no demonstration, and

moved off toward a group that could be dimly noted a little farther inland.

Having left them behind, our young friends kept a keen lookout for the canoe of Wag-ma-rah. The boys had no wish to meet it, for the farther they went from the post, the more likely such a meeting would cause a fight. If the Winnebago and two companions had dared to attack the young Americans a few days before, surely six of them would not hesitate to do so now. Prudence whispered to the youths to turn back while they had the time, but it was just like them to keep on. Youth is always venturesome and the certainty of danger adds spice to the undertaking in hand.

Jethro was paddling slowly and silently over the sluggish stream, hugging the shore as closely as he could, when Auric suddenly whispered "*Sh!*" At the same instant Jethro held the blade motionless, for he had been equally quick to detect the danger.

CHAPTER XV

THE BURNS CABIN

THAT which had caught the eye of the youths was an Indian canoe, drawn up against the bank, just far enough to prevent its displacement by the current. No warrior was visible.

In accordance with his training, Jethro noiselessly worked his boat back for several yards, and then checked it with its nose against the shore. Then the two sat for four or five minutes, listening without either speaking. Auric was the first to whisper:

"We don't hear anything of them, but I believe they are not far off; you have no doubt of that being the canoe we saw?"

"None at all; what shall we do?"

That was the question indeed, and it was hard for the two to decide. It was absurd to believe that if Wag-ma-rah and his treacherous companions wished to have a secret talk, they would take the pains to come this distance from the fort, when no possible necessity existed. And yet, knowing the miscreant as they did, and well aware of his venomous hatred of all white men, neither could doubt that he was

controlled by some malignant motive. His purpose must concern the garrison and white families. If Auric, with his knowledge of the different Indian tongues, could learn the truth, it would be of momentous importance to Captain Heald and to Mr. Kinzie himself.

It was a striking proof of the mental brightness and woodcraft of the youths that both fixed upon the same explanation, and, as results proved, they were correct.

"Now Wag-ma-rah and those scamps with him would never have paddled this far for the sake of having a talk together," said Jethro; "an Indian hates work too much to indulge in it when he doesn't have to. They have come up here to meet another party of Indians; there may be twenty or more of them; they are forming some plot to get a larger share of the plunder than belongs to them, or to reach a clear understanding of what they shall do when the other Indians make their attack on us after we leave the fort."

"And these redskins whom they have set out to meet belong to the same tribe with the couple that came into Mr. Kinzie's store this afternoon; of course the two are with them; they are the ringleaders in this frightful plot, and if we had enough men with us to wipe out the whole party, I believe it would save us all."

"I wish we had them," muttered Jethro, with a compression of the lips and a flash of the eyes which showed his deadly earnestness.

So long as the two held their present position they must be in peril, for the returning Indians could not fail to discover the canoe, even if the youths concealed themselves. The banks of the stream were covered with long, lush grass, somewhat wilted by the continued drought, but there were no trees for some distance in any direction. Peering off to one side of the stream they made out the dim form of the cabin of the settler named John Burns, who, with his family, were slain and scalped by a party of Winnebagoes in the month of the preceding April. The marauders did not burn the small structure of logs, which now remained as a memorial of the dreadful tragedy.

"We must hide the boat," said Auric, as he stepped to land. Jethro did the same, and the two pulled the canoe far enough in the grass to conceal it from sight of any one passing up or down stream. Wag-ma-rah might paddle within a yard of shore without seeing it.

This precaution having been taken, our young friends were again at a standstill. They could not guess the location of the parties they were hunting, nor did they know where to look for them. The presence of their canoe a few rods away showed they had made a landing, but how could it be learned whither they had gone?

Assuming a crouching posture, the two raised their heads high enough to look in every direction over the top of the grass. As revealed in the moonlight, they saw the marshy ground, stretching above them until it reached the dark line of the woods, while a hundred yards distant the faint outlines of Burns's cabin showed. But look toward whichever point of the compass they chose, they failed to see a living person.

Puzzled as to what they should do, if indeed they could do anything, Jethro was about to whisper to his friend, when both suddenly heard two or three words, uttered in such guttural tones as to show the speaker was an Indian.

"That was Winnebago!" said Auric.

"What do the words mean?"

"'*We go home.*'"

Sometimes at night an eddy of wind will suddenly carry one's voice a long distance and cease to do so as suddenly, owing to a change in the air current. The words had come from the direction of the deserted cabin. The youths listened, expecting to hear more, but all remained as silent as the tomb. The favoring twist, so to speak, in the air was not repeated.

But matters did not long remain quiescent. Naturally, since the words had come from the direction of the old cabin, the youths kept their attention mainly upon that point.

They were still looking and listening, when they

descried shadowy forms which they knew at once were Indians. They were coming apparently from the cabin and making their way to the boat.

"They will pass mighty close; let's move a little farther off," suggested Auric, who, as he spoke, retreated several yards into the grass, followed by his friend. At a safe distance they halted and again waited and listened. By and by they heard the approaching redskins, against whose legs and bodies the tall grass swished. No one spoke, for apparently each warrior had said all he had in mind to say.

There was little risk in taking a peep at the strangers, and the youths raised their heads high enough to see them. The first glimpse revealed that instead of six warriors there were fully three times as many, — a fact which confirmed both in the opinion they had formed as to the meaning of this night trip of Wag-ma-rah and his companions.

The red men were so near that Auric and Jethro had no time for theorizing. It was impossible that all their enemies should return to the neighborhood of the fort by means of the boat. If not, they must pass alarmingly close to where the lads were crouching. Auric saw the danger and, touching the shoulder of his comrade, began creeping still farther into the grass and away from their canoe.

The precaution was not a moment too soon. Three of the Indians entered the craft and one of them

began paddling toward the fort. The others tramped through the grass beside the stream. In doing so they bisected the trail of the youths, whom they must have discovered but for their change of position. Not until they were beyond sight did Jethro speak.

"It looks, Auric, as if they made their meeting-place at Burns's house; why do you suppose they did that?"

"I don't know that they had any reason, unless it was easier for the redskins to find, since they must have come from many different directions."

"I don't fancy we can learn anything by taking a look at the cabin, but since Wag-ma-rah and his friends have given us the slip, let's have a squint at it."

"It can't be that any of them are staying behind; if so, it won't do to run into them."

"We'll be careful, but I can't think of any reason that would keep a part of the Winnebagoes behind, while the others have gone back to the fort. Come on; there's no saying what we shall learn."

Never were truer words spoken.

If either Auric or Jethro had been asked to tell what he expected to gain by the venture upon which they now entered he could not have answered. If any of the Indians were still in the cabin, the boys needed to give it a wide berth, since the circumstances shut out all possibility of playing the eavesdropper; if none of them was there no information was to be

obtained. None the less, the youths pushed on through the tall grass, taking as much care to hide their approach as if they were entering the camp of an enemy.

John Burns's cabin stood on slightly elevated ground, more than a hundred yards from the river. This location secured it against any overflow or rise of the stream. The land for most of the intervening distance was so weedy and poor, that no attempt was ever made to till it, but directly in front of the dwelling a patch of ground was cleared, and was being put under cultivation when the raiding Winnebagoes swooped down and killed every member of the family. At the rear another small space was generally tilled, but the calamity had come too early in the season for anything of that nature to be done.

The log structure was so situated that the moonlight struck the front. While the lads were still some distance they could see the open door, which had been stove in and wrenched from its hinges. On either side of the entrance was a window, also smashed, so that any one could have forced his way through it. No door was at the rear, but there were two other windows in a similar wrecked condition.

From what has been said it will be observed that our young friends could veil their approach until within a few rods of the cabin, where the old cultivated ground, now partly overgrown with weeds,

compelled them to pass into the open. When they reached the boundary line they halted.

"I wonder," whispered Auric, "whether the Winnebagoes held their council inside."

"It doesn't seem likely; they probably used the cabin as a landmark to guide the different warriors to the spot."

"Have you ever been in the cabin since the family were killed?"

"I came out with the party who buried the poor folks, after the Indians had been driven off. We brought away what little furniture was left, and the interior is empty."

"I don't see why we should hold back, if we are going to take a peep inside."

Carefully peering in all directions and discovering nothing, Auric took the lead with his friend at his heels. A peculiar shiver was felt by both as they drew near the small porch, consisting of a couple of tumble-down steps, and recalled the terrible deed that had been done there hardly four months before. Had either of the boys been alone he would have recoiled when on the threshold, but there was nothing of the kind now.

Auric was the first to enter the cabin. The moonbeams fell a few inches within the door, but beyond that, everything being in shadow, the eye saw nothing. They were in utter darkness, so far as their immediate

surroundings were concerned, but the openings of the door and windows against the silvery moonlight enabled them to keep their bearings.

"Jet, I have never been inside and can't see where to put foot or hand; suppose you take the lead."

"There's little leading to do; we have only one square room with nothing in it beside ourselves. You saw the stone chimney from the outside, and know where the fireplace is."

Each lad held his gun in his extended left hand, with the empty right reaching out and diverging from it. This precaution was to prevent their bumping into anything which the eye was unable to detect. One turned to the right and the other to the left, pushing their shoes inch by inch over the rough floor, and wabbling their hands in front to make sure no obstacle got between them.

Auric snickered.

"What are we doing this for, Jet?"

"Blessed if I know; let's get out and go home; suppose the Winnebagoes should find they had forgotten something and come back; wouldn't we be caught in a fine scrape?"

"What could they forget?"

"They might have appointed a secretary who left his papers behind —"

Auric gave a gasp of terror. Jethro stopped and whispered:

"What's the matter?"

"There's some one else in this room! I felt his foot!"

The two stood as if frozen, listening and vainly trying to peer into the gloom. No sound was heard, nor could either detect the faintest noise.

"It can't be, Auric; how did you make the mistake?"

"Step over to my side."

Guided by the sound of the guarded voice, Jethro began feeling his way to his friend. At the second step he stopped short, his heart almost standing still.

"You're right! let's leave!"

"Hold on; if he's alive he'll pick us off as we go through the door."

For the minute or two that they stood motionless, their thoughts were busy. They knew beyond a doubt that some one else was in the cabin, for each had struck his foot while groping about in the darkness.

In that brief interval, it became clear to both that whoever the person was, he was dead. If not, he never would have allowed the two to enter unchallenged, nor would he have remained still while they were moving about the place.

"Hold my gun," whispered Auric, and his companion groped about with one hand until it closed around the weapon.

Auric drew forth his steel and flint and tinder. He

struck the metal rapidly against the flint, sending out a stream of sparks, one of which soon caught the prepared bit of linen. This was raised in front of his face and he blew carefully upon it until it broke into a tiny flame. Then he raised it above his head and the two saw a startling sight.

At one side of the room sat a Winnebago warrior, or rather that which had been such. His back was against the logs behind him, so that his pose was a sitting one, except that his head was bowed forward on his chest. His arms hung limp at his side, and his legs were thrust out in front, separating the feet by a space of half a yard. It was against one of the moccasins that Auric Kingdon struck his shoe while feeling his way around the room.

The boys knew the Indian was dead before they looked upon him. The frightful wound on his crown left no doubt of the means by which death had come to him. The knife and tomahawk had been taken from his girdle, and his rifle was gone. It was evident that some of the party whom our young friends tried to shadow had entered the Burns cabin. A violent quarrel followed, and here was the result. Perhaps the miserable victim had raised his voice in a prayer for mercy to the whites, and his enraged chief struck him down. It might have been a different plea, but for the fact that no American Indian ever slew another for urging vengeance upon an enemy.

Auric held the bit of rag until it burned his fingers, when he dropped it to the floor and took his gun from the hand of his friend.

"It is time to leave, Jet; we have seen more than we wanted to see."

Passing through the door they were moving across the small open space, when, to their consternation, they found themselves face to face with at least a dozen of the Winnebagoes, who, for some reason, were coming back to the cabin.

"Into the house!" exclaimed Jethro; "we've got to make a fight for it!"

Auric was at his heels, and a minute later he gave an exhibition of woodcraft that would have done credit to the most famous scout on the frontier.

CHAPTER XVI

OUTWITTED

THE returning Winnebagoes caught sight of the two youths an instant before the latter saw them. One party was as much astonished as the other, but the mutual feeling lasted only a few seconds. The redskins did not make any outcry, but dashed forward to capture the lads.

In doing so they committed an error, for they gave them time to dive through the open door, whereas, had they opened fire, they must have brought down one if not both, when such slight distance separated the parties. But the Winnebagoes may have asked themselves whether better work would not be accomplished by capturing the young Americans. The reports of guns might bring a rescue party from the fort, for, as we have shown, the hour had not arrived for open hostilities. If the boys were taken, the merciless captors could work their will with them without danger to themselves.

By driving Auric and Jethro into the old cabin, they would be caught inextricably in a trap. That was the plan, therefore, which was followed by the

Winnebagoes. They saw the couple dart through the door into the darkness of the building, and probably the redskins grinned with exultation when they witnessed the success of their scheme.

But these same redskins did not need to be told that the youths thus driven at bay would die fighting, rather than submit to the tenderest mercies of a Winnebago. To make a charge, therefore, through the open door would have brought the shots that were certain to stretch two at least of the warriors in death, after which the young Americans would club their guns and give a terrific account of themselves.

The Winnebagoes numbered more than Auric and Jethro supposed. There were sixteen of them, and, as fate ordered, one was Wag-mă-rah, whose hatred of the lads was like that of a fiend. The opportunity for which he longed and had sought had come to him when he had no expectation of the kind. Far be it from him to let it pass unimproved! One of these youths had wounded two of his companions, so that as yet they could take no part in warfare, and the two had brought humiliation upon him. Revenge is sweet, and to no human being so sweet as to the American Indian.

The besiegers were speedily confronted by a problem which must have given them anxiety. They could hold the couple in the cabin beyond any possibility of escape, but several days and nights must pass

before they would succumb to hunger or thirst. Before that period passed the youths would be missed at Fort Dearborn, and in all probability their friends would not know where to look for them. It was all-important, therefore, that the issue should be speedily forced.

Within ten minutes after the couple had dashed into the cabin the Winnebagoes had separated, and spread out so as to enclose it on every side. Since it stood well out from the wood on the north, and was surrounded by the tall grass, up to where the tilled ground began, not even a cat could have stolen in or out without being revealed in the bright moonlight.

It will be understood further, that if the besieging Indians had chosen to do so, they could have captured both youths after a brief struggle; but of necessity such a struggle involved the certain death of the foremost redskins. Driven at bay, the youths would fight like tigers, and one or two of their enemies must bite the dust.

Now, although the American Indian at times shows high personal courage, there is no record of any one of them sacrificing himself for the "good of the cause"; he is willing to join in a charge or rush, but has no heart for playing the martyr. Thus it came about that, while separating and disposing themselves so as to command all sides of the cabin, they took care not to tempt a shot from the defenders.

Wag-ma-rah knew that one of the lads — and the one whom he held in special abhorrence — could speak his tongue as well as he. So, keeping himself screened in the grass at the front of the cabin, he called out:

"Let my brothers give themselves up to the Winnebagoes; they shall not be harmed."

This being so, the ones thus summoned might well ask in return the reason for this demand upon them for surrender. No open warfare existed between their people and the red men around Fort Dearborn, and the call, to say the least, was a singular one.

Having spoken in a voice which he tried to disguise, Wag-ma-rah and the whole party waited for the reply of the Americans. Several minutes passed and the silence was unbroken. The Winnebago called again, increasing the loudness of his voice, and repeating his words. But, as before, he failed to bring any response.

"My brothers cannot help themselves," called the Winnebago; "if they do not come forth we shall burn the white man's wigwam over their heads! We shall show them no mercy if they do not believe the promise of the Winnebagoes."

To this the reply might have been made that no mercy would be shown if the command of the redskins were obeyed. But, so far as results went, Wag-ma-rah might as well have addressed his words to the logs themselves.

I said at the close of the preceding chapter that Auric Kingdon gave an exhibition of woodcraft which would have done credit to the most distinguished of the white scouts of the frontier. It was in this wise:

When he and Jethro Judd plunged through the entrance, they did not halt for a moment, but dashed to the rear.

"Out of the window, Jet!" he called; "it's our only chance to give them the slip!"

The next instant, Auric was forcing his body through the opening on his right. It was a tight squeeze, and it looked for an instant as if he would fail. But he leaned his rifle against the outside, with the stock on the ground, and desperately forced himself through at some expense to his clothing. Jethro was hardly a second behind him, and the two dropped lightly to the earth, crouched as low as they could, scurried across the weedy garden, and, diving into the tall grass, kept up their flight till they had run fifty paces or more.

The cleverness of this action lay in its promptness. Had the youths hesitated for only a minute they would have been too late. Few would have thought of the recourse until after they had stood at bay for some time, with the cabin enclosed on all sides and escape shut off. In the same moment that Auric dashed inside, the one and only thing for him to do presented itself. Not a second was wasted. It is by

such quick wit and readiness of resource that one pioneer has saved his life, and by tardiness in availing himself of the single means of escape another has lost it.

It must have been soon after the failure of his threat to bring an answer that Wag-ma-rah suspected the truth. He knew of the slight delay in surrounding the building, but it was reasonable for him to think the youths would wait before using the chance offered.

The cabin had two sides without windows. The stone chimney was wholly on the outside and could be approached without risk. Wag-ma-rah and a companion, who shared his suspicions, rose from the grass and stealthily walked to the pile of irregular stones. Applying their ears to the material, they listened. Not the least sound was heard from within. Other warriors joined them, and the belief was general that the couple had escaped. Still the leaders held back from exposing themselves to the serious results of a mistake on their part.

But one of their number was more plucky than the rest. He suddenly whisked about the end of the cabin and dashed through the door. It took but a minute to learn the truth. The building was empty of all living persons except himself.

Meanwhile, Auric and Jethro were improving the advantage they had gained through the woodcraft of the youthful visitor from Fort Wayne. It was to

be expected that, sooner or later, the Winnebagoes would discover the trick played upon them. They were not likely to cease their efforts against the lads until they had tried further to outwit them.

"It will be well to get a little farther from the cabin, before we set out to find our canoe," suggested Auric.

"We are so near the woods that we can make use of them."

"I was thinking of that."

With as much caution as if they were within a few rods of the Winnebagoes, the boys stole through the grass, and a few minutes later reached the edge of the forest which stretched endless miles to the north and west. Being comparatively free from undergrowth, they had no trouble in passing the short distance to the edge of the river, down whose bank they started in quest of their boat. Before leaving the shadow of the trees the two stopped for a hasty consultation.

"I would give a good deal to understand all these goings on to-night," said Auric; "it looks pretty certain that the Indians chose the Burns cabin because it is a handy place to meet."

"There must have been a sudden quarrel, such as you know often breaks out when a lot of red men meet in council; some fancy led them to put the victim inside the house."

"I don't care about that, but what made that party

come back to the cabin, after we had seen them well started on their way to the Fort?"

"We are not sure it is the same party."

"Yes, we are; didn't you recognize the voice of Wag-ma-rah, when he shouted that he would burn the cabin unless we surrendered? He must have said something before, that he thought we had heard, but we were too far off to catch it."

"I heard the voice, but did not think it was his; are you sure?"

"I can't mistake the music of his tones."

"That shows, then, it was the same party, or some of them at least; I suspect their return had something to do with the dead warrior in the cabin; but what's the use of bothering over a matter of that kind, Auric? It's time we were at home with our report."

The youths had a considerable distance to travel to reach the spot where they had drawn their canoe up the bank among the tall grass. The liability of again meeting the Winnebagoes, whose conduct was so eccentric that evening, caused the lads to use extreme care. They kept close to the stream, with the former a few paces in advance. Their plan was to steal forward for two or three rods, their shoulders bent so low that no one could have seen them a few paces away. Then young Kingdon would halt, his friend instantly doing the same, take off his cap and slowly raise his head until he could peer over the top of the

grass. He took pains not to lift his head an inch too high, and he made his survey complete. All being clear, the advance was resumed as before.

In due time they reached a point where once more they could plainly see the front of the Burns cabin. Both partly straightened up to get the best view possible of it. There was the entrance through which they had made their way in such haste, with a narrow smashed window on either side, but not a glimpse was caught of an Indian.

What had become of the party? Had they returned to Fort Dearborn by another route, or were they still lingering near the cabin?

If they took the same course in leaving as before, they must come near our young friends, who hesitated for some time whether to push on or wait till they could gain more definite knowledge. On the advice of Jethro they kept their position for nearly a half hour.

The relative location of the cabin and stream told them when they were close to the place where they had hidden their canoe. A final pause was made, and each studied every part of their field of vision with the closest possible scrutiny. The result was as before.

Auric, still in advance, threaded his way for a few yards, when, without raising his head, he checked himself and, turning, asked in a guarded voice:

"Do you notice it?"

"Notice what?"

"Somebody is smoking near us."

Jethro softly sniffed and caught the faint but pungent odor of tobacco.

"Wait a minute," added Auric, who moved as silently as a serpent through the grass. Jethro waited with his eyes on the spot where he had disappeared, and admired the skill of his comrade, who was absent only a few minutes.

"What do you think, Jet? The scamp is sitting in our boat and smoking his pipe, while he waits for us to come to him."

CHAPTER XVII

AMONG THE SHADOWS

THIS was news indeed. The first inclination of Jethro was to smile at the mental picture of an Indian warrior sitting in their canoe, coolly smoking his pipe and waiting for them to come to him. He must have had a poor opinion of the woodcraft of the youths to think they would not be warned by the odor of tobacco.

When Auric came back to his friend, they were beyond sight of the boat, though still so near that they spoke in the most guarded whispers and avoided any movement that could betray them to the redskin whose hearing and vision were trained to the highest point.

"Did you get a look at his face?"

"No; he is sitting with his back this way; he or some one has shoved the canoe into the water, so that it would float off, but for his weight holding down the prow."

"I must have a squint at the fellow; like about everything else we have seen to-night, I can't understand what it means; maybe other Indians are close by."

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"It doesn't look that way; be careful."

This time Jethro took the lead. The passage of Auric had pressed down the grass sufficiently to leave a trail, and the lad had not far to go when, by gently parting the blades in front of his face, he saw the picture that had been described to him.

An Indian warrior was seated in the front of their canoe, his face turned from them, while he slowly puffed his pipe. He was as motionless as a statue. Instead of sitting on the gunwale of the frail craft he rested on the bottom, so that all below the upper part of his body was shut from view. The stem of his pipe was so long that the bowl must have been between or below his knees. Every few seconds a small but thick roll of vapor climbed over one shoulder, as he expelled it from his mouth. It was as if he were sunk in deep meditation without any thought or care of what was going on around him. Such, however, is never the mental state of an Indian. He may be thinking deeply, but is always on the alert and rouses like a flash at the least disturbance.

The lads secured a position side by side, one gaining as good a view as the other. Jethro was anxious to see the warrior's face, but could not do so, unless he turned his head. The youth had a fancy that he was an acquaintance, but he did not mean to take any chances.

That which both wished for was granted a minute

later. The Pottawatomie, as they observed him to be, filled his mouth, turned his face at right angles and sent out the smoke in a series of rings, which doubled over one another, after the fashion of many a smoker in these days.

The action revealed the profile of the Indian, and with an astonishment which may be imagined the boys recognized him as the chieftain Black Partridge. Jethro in his pleasure would have pronounced the Pottawatomie's name, had not his companion warned him by a touch and shake of his head not to do so.

Then the two retreated with the utmost stealth until they were farther from the spot than when they parted company a few minutes before.

"Why didn't you want me to speak to him?" asked Jethro.

"We don't know whether Black Partridge is an enemy or friend."

"Hasn't he always been a friend?"

"So have many of his tribe who are yearning to scalp every one of us; he may still be friendly, but what is he doing in our canoe?"

"It looks as if he were waiting for us to join him."

"That may be, but, yet, I don't like seeing him so near that party who tried to trap us in the Burns cabin; it looks very much as if he belongs to the same company; if I'm not mistaken he has painted his face."

"That is true; I saw several rings on his cheeks and temples."

"He was one of the Pottawatomies who came out to the cabin to form some plot that we shall learn about before we are many days older; he could not but have known of our row with the Winnebagoes; perhaps he didn't care about lifting our scalps himself, but was willing to sit by while others did it —"

Jethro touched the arm of his companion, who at that moment was not gazing in the same direction with himself. The former was looking toward the spot where the canoe lay, when a phantom seemed to assume form among the drooping blades of grass. No noise was heard, but the next instant Black Partridge stood before them. His subtle woodcraft had warned him of the presence of the youths, and he made his way to where they were crouching.

The chief had laid aside his pipe, and carried his rifle in one hand. His face, revealed in the moonlight, was seen to be painted more hideously than they had supposed from the partial view gained. As he caught sight of the youths, he paused and looked down on them without speaking. Jethro straightened up.

"I am glad to meet you, Black Partridge."

"What you do here?" he asked in a displeased voice; "why so far from Fort?"

"There are bad Indians around the Fort; some of

them went out to the Burns house to meet other bad Indians; we followed to learn what we could about them."

This answer was made in English by Auric.

"What you learn?" asked the Pottawatomie, crisply.

"Precious little; they were through their meeting before we got there; we went into the cabin and stumbled over the dead body of a Winnebago; then, when we started to leave, the party came back and we dodged back into the house."

That the chieftain was interested in this narrative was shown by his question, which came quickly.

"How did you get out?"

"Well, we weren't more than fairly inside, when we slipped out again; we knew they would lose little time in surrounding the place, and we left before they could do so."

The sachem admired cleverness of that nature more than any other quality. Looking into the faces of the youths he said in a low voice:

"Much smart — know much — beat any men."

"We are thankful for your good opinion, Black Partridge," replied Auric, who knew that such a liking in the circumstances meant a good deal more than one would suppose.

"My sons are big fools," remarked the chieftain, whipping into his own tongue; "they are the biggest fools in the world."

"Now you make our hearts heavy," replied Auric, assuming more depression than he felt.

"Why did you come up the river?"

The youth was too prudent to say it was at the suggestion of Mr. Kinzie; for the relations between him and the chief were too delicate to stand further straining.

"We know that many evil Indians have come among the Pottawatomies and Winnebagoes; we do not know what they are doing, but, as I said, we wished to learn."

"And did my son find what he sought?"

"Only what I have already told you, which I admit doesn't amount to anything."

Auric hastily translated the words, as they were spoken, to his friend, who thus kept even with the conversation. Jethro wished to suggest a question or two, but hesitated. Whatever he said to Auric would be understood by Black Partridge, who might have resented the interference. Therefore, the youth held his peace.

As for Auric, he was curious as to the meaning of what had taken place and he hoped that the chieftain would explain. Since he did not, the youth feared to offend him by his inquiries.

The curious situation now came of no member of the little party uttering a word for several minutes. Auric had made his reply to the question of Black

Partridge, and he and his companion waited for him to speak again. All three were standing in the grass, with the calmly flowing stream on one hand and the swampy plain on the other. The boys, as well as the sachem, kept glancing in different directions, but none saw anything of moment.

The Pottawatomie was debating some question with himself. What it was could not be guessed by the lads, who patiently waited for him to speak. He looked toward the cabin where everything was as quiescent as on the day following the tragedy months before; then he gazed off over the sluggish river, but neither moved nor opened his lips.

If the sachem was considering whether he should make some revelation to his young friends, he decided in the negative. Still silent, he stooped slightly, seized the canoe by the gunwale and shoved it farther into the water.

"Get in; we go back."

When the craft was balanced, the chief placed himself in the stern, with Auric just in front, while Jethro again took up the paddle. Thus the three faced the course of the boat. The lad swayed the blade with deliberation, though ready to increase or diminish the speed at the will of Black Partridge. The chief remained silent.

It was true, as has been said, that our young friends had wholly failed in gathering any knowledge of the

peculiar plotting on foot at the Burns cabin. In the effort to find out something, both met with one of the narrowest escapes of their lives. But the puzzling question in the mind of each was as to the part the Pottawatomie leader was playing in this business. With all the sagacity of these youths trained in woodcraft and the ways of the frontier, they found the question a hard one to answer; and yet it was another striking proof of their shrewdness and brilliancy that each, without speaking to the other, formed the same theories, and the truth is still more remarkable that the two were substantially correct.

Black Partridge was halting between two opinions. The situation of no one at Fort Dearborn was more delicate than his. He wished to be friendly with the whites, but was angered because of the destruction of the whiskey. While this of itself would not have changed his sentiments, it had something to do with such change. The difficulty was that, as he had told Captain Heald, his warriors were passing, if they had not already passed, beyond his control. If he should resolutely set himself against them, he would be swept aside. His natural impulses drew him toward these turbulent miscreants, but the memory of that medal, and his knowledge of the valuable favors done him in the past by the Americans, with the others that were sure to follow, held him in doubt. His position may be summed up in the statement that Black Partridge

was anxious to save a few people at Fort Dearborn, but was perfectly willing to see the large majority of them massacred. He wished no harm to come to Mr. Kinzie or any member of his family, he felt friendly toward Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd, and would do more to save them than to save any one else. Learning of the rash venture of the youths, and suspecting their errand, he had tramped after them, in order to protect them from the penalty of their own foolishness. Well aware of the meeting of the plotters at the Burns cabin, he took no part therein. He knew of the vicious quarrel that had broken out and of its consequences. Still he remained on the river shore, awaiting the moment when it should be necessary for him to stretch his authority to the breaking point in order to keep the scalps of the young Americans on their crowns.

From where Black Partridge sat he saw the flight of the boys into the cabin, upon meeting the returning Winnebagoes. Believing them at bay, he felt there was no call for haste on his part. So, accidentally coming upon their canoe, he lit his pipe and coolly sat down to await the run of events. It would take some time for the Winnebagoes to bring the youths to terms, for he understood his countrymen well enough to be assured that, large as was their party, they would make no attempt to rush the defenders. Seated thus, calmly meditating and quite content

with the situation, the surprise of the evening came with the return of Auric and Jethro to the spot where they had left their canoe. Their exploit was so brilliant that the grim chief did not withhold his admiration, though so displeased with the whole venture on the part of the lads, that he called them fools for having left their home that night.

The theory of the two regarding the return of the Winnebagoes was that the warrior who had been slain and left in the cabin was a chief or prominent leader, and that the sachem in command of the party decided that it would not do to abandon him in that fashion. He had, therefore, brought back his warriors for the purpose of paying proper respect to the fallen one, by removing and giving it burial after the Indian fashion.

Whether or not this supposition was correct, our young friends were never able to learn, and the matter was really of no special importance.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO OLD FRIENDS

THE distance between the Burns cabin and the home of the trader Kinzie was about half a mile. From the moment the canoe began its progress, Black Partridge did not speak until a little more than half the space had been passed. Jethro Judd swung the paddle with machine-like evenness, glancing from one shore to the other, and, like his companion, wondering whether an interruption was likely to come.

By and by the occupants of the craft began to catch glimpses of warriors moving here and there. Sometimes they saw a single redskin, then couples, and once they observed three who paused and surveyed the boat, but did not speak or make any demonstration. Jethro kept well off shore, for the moon was now so nearly overhead that no shadow offered protection, had anything of the kind been desired.

Suddenly, in rounding a slight bend in the stream, they came in sight of a group of nearly a score, who were gathered near the shore, with the lights of the fort twinkling a little way beyond. Auric could not avoid asking Black Partridge in his own tongue:

"Are they the Indians who were at the Burns house?"

"They are; most of them are Winnebagoes, but there are Pottawatomies among them."

Auric interpreted the reply to Jethro, adding in a whisper:

"It looks as if we're going to have trouble."

"Ask Black Partridge whether I shall put farther out in the stream and paddle faster."

The chief understood the question and said:

"Go ashore on the same side."

It was a startling command, but the youth did not dare disobey. Here were the warriors who had fiercely sought their lives a short time before. Instead of fleeing from them, the two must place themselves in their power. Everything now depended upon the Pottawatomie chieftain, and neither of our young friends ever understood the frightfully delicate situation, which instantly assumed form and lasted for some minutes.

The moment the canoe touched the muddy bank the sachem stepped ashore.

"Let my children go to their home and *stay there!*"

Having given his order, Black Partridge turned his whole attention to the warriors whom he had joined. Repressing all signs of fear, Jethro Judd propelled the boat out into the stream and resumed his progress toward home.

How he longed to drive the craft as close as he could to the farther bank and then speed it forward with all his power! There was no saying what devilish whim would seize the redskins on the other bank. They were still far enough from the fort to feel safe in doing as they chose, and their malignancy had been shown only a little while before.

"Don't you do it, Jet," said Auric, reading the thoughts in the mind of his comrade; "I wish we were at home, but any haste in getting there will tempt them to fire upon us; take it easy, old fellow."

"It's mighty hard, for I don't believe Black Partridge can restrain them."

"You might put a little more power in the paddle, but not enough for them to notice."

Jethro shied the craft further over, and increased its speed somewhat, but restrained himself from showing any panic.

Meanwhile, the Pottawatomie chieftain had his hands full. Although he was accepted as the most prominent leader among the Indians in the neighborhood of Fort Dearborn, he spoke the truth when he told Captain Heald that the younger warriors were passing beyond his control. Most of the group were not members of his own tribe, and they could claim excuse for refusing to obey his orders.

The first thing Black Partridge did upon joining the party was to remark that the two lads were his

friends, and he meant to save them from harm *until the morrow.* What then took place he did not care, but he would not allow them to be killed before that time. This was spoken with a deadly earnestness that had its effect, and yet it must have failed but for the terrifying incident which immediately followed.

The declaration was accepted by all the party with a single exception. A tall, sinewy buck burst forth with an angry exclamation, saying these youths had followed them to the Burns house and learned of what was said there by the Indians, some of whom had come from a long distance. Their plot would be betrayed by the two, if they were allowed to live.

The chief sternly said this was untrue, for the lads did not go to the cabin until after the council was over. His disputant reminded the chieftain that one of them could speak their tongue as well as themselves, and he must have overheard, while hiding, some of the words that had been spoken by the members of the party. It needed only an expression or two thus to enlighten him as to the whole scheme that was on foot.

The singular feature of this hot dispute was that the warrior who dared thus to beard the lion to his face was a member of his own tribe. The others had been awed by the words and manner of the Pottawatomie, and listened stolidly to the conversation which was fast reaching the exploding point.

Black Partridge virtually called his warrior a liar.

The latter was so enraged by the epithet that he raised his rifle and pointed it at the canoe, which had not yet passed out of range. Before he could aim, Black Partridge whipped out his tomahawk and, with the quickness of lightning, sank the blade into the crown of the rebel, cleaving the skull as if it were a rotten apple!

The victim sank to the ground without so much as a groan. Holding the dripping implement in his rigid right hand, the infuriated chieftain faced the party, defying them, by his looks and manner, to take up the cause of his presumptuous subject.

Angry as the warriors may have been, they were cowed by the terrible sachem, and not one of them uttered a word of protest. Scorning with his moccasin the form stretched at his feet, the Pottawatomie leader turned his back upon the group, and stalked in the direction of the Indian lodges to the eastward of the fort.

In his tempestuous wrath he made sure, before doing this, that the canoe had passed beyond range of the warriors whom he left behind. He moved slowly, for he was ready to interfere again should it become necessary, but he was confident the call would not arise, as it did not.

Black Partridge did not halt among the lodges of his people. Most of them were moving to and fro, smoking, talking, and discussing the plans for the

outbreak which all agreed among themselves would come with the morrow. The heat of the evening, and the pestering mosquitoes, caused many of the warriors and squaws to refrain from lying down, as they would have done had the circumstances been different.

At the moment the chieftain reached the farther edge of the camp, and was close to the forest, he heard the reports of two guns, fired in such quick succession that the interval was barely noticeable. The sound came from a point a third of a mile away, in the direction of the Fort Wayne trail. The Pottawatomie instantly checked his walk and listened.

No more than two or three minutes passed, when the same double report came again through the woods. It was as if two men, having discharged their weapons, had taken just enough time to reload and fire them again. The echoes of the reports had hardly died away on the sultry air, when Black Partridge strode over the trail at a more rapid pace than he had used that evening. The peculiar sounds were signals intended for his ears, and he knew from whom they came.

The trail leading southward was so well marked that any one could have followed it by the light of the moon; but Black Partridge was so familiar with its turnings that he would have had no trouble in traversing it on the darkest night. The call which thus

drew him forth was not repeated, nor did he expect it to be. Where the respective parties were concerned, such repetition was superfluous.

When quite near the spot whence the signal had come, the Pottawatomie halted under the shadow of the overhanging trees and uttered a cry that was a perfect imitation of the hooting of an owl. That it was expected was proved by a similar response within the next few seconds. The signalling had been completed, and the chieftain calmly awaited the coming of the other, who was only a short distance away.

At the particular spot where the Pottawatomie had paused he could see only a short distance ahead, because of the arching trees, but the moonbeams found their way sufficiently through the foliage for him to catch sight of a tall, sinewy figure that soon appeared, coming from the other direction. He advanced without the least hesitation, like one who has not the slightest misgiving of what is before him. When he caught sight of the chieftain, he called out:

"Helloa, Black Partridge! I'm powerful glad to see you!"

A moment later the two clasped hands like old friends, met after a long separation. The newcomer was a white man, dressed in the garb of the border, but, as proof of his confidence in the honor of the Pottawatomie, he did not bring his rifle with him. One glance at him in the imperfect moonlight would

have shown that he possessed prodigious strength and the activity of a panther. In short, the man was one of the most famous frontiersmen of a century ago, being Captain Wells, whose exploits form a part of the thrilling history of the West. He was an uncle of Mrs. Rebecca Heald, wife of the commandant of Fort Dearborn. News had reached him at Fort Wayne of the imminent danger of the advanced western post, and he set out at once to give what help he could. He gathered about a score of Miami warriors, to whom he explained the situation and offered large pay for their assistance in escorting the garrison and their families to Fort Wayne. Captain Wells was mounted on an excellent horse, but his Miamis were on foot.

Such an experienced scout and leader as Captain Wells would never have made this hurried journey had he known all the facts. The news that came to him was that Captain Heald, in obedience to the orders of General Hull, would soon evacuate Fort Dearborn and start with all his people for Fort Wayne. While his company was comparatively strong, every man that could be added to it would be of immeasurable value. From what was told Wells, he did not suppose there were more than one or two hundred Indians near Dearborn, nor did he know of their indignation because of the destruction of the whiskey. I repeat that had the whole truth been clear to him

he would have stayed at home, for so insignificant a force as he led to the assistance of the endangered ones must be absolutely useless: his Miamis would simply prove so many more victims. Moreover, little reliance could be placed upon their courage.

Captain Wells knew, however, that there was one person at Fort Dearborn upon whom he could count to tell him the truth. This was Black Partridge, chief of the Pottawatomies. The two had been warm friends for years. Wells belonged to a party who once set out to punish some Shawanoes that had killed several settlers. The redskins were too fleet to be overtaken, but while pushing forward, the pursuer came upon a half dozen Pottawatomies who had wandered beyond their regular hunting-grounds and were made prisoners before they knew their danger. Their leader was Black Partridge, who proved the innocence of himself and his companions of the outrages referred to. The companions of Wells were so furious over what had occurred, and their failure to reach the marauders, that they insisted upon slaying the Pottawatomies on "general principles" as may be said. This horrible policy, which, sad to say, was carried out more than once on the border, was defeated by Wells. His resolute stand and his well-known courage saved Black Partridge and his friends from death.

The Pottawatomie, like most of his race, remembered

a kindness as long as an injury. He and Wells met several times afterwards, and there was nothing in the power of the chieftain which he would not have gladly done for his white brother. They engaged in several hunting excursions, and agreed upon the double report of their guns as a call which nothing should prevent the other from obeying, if it were within the compass of human possibility.

From Black Partridge, Captain Wells gained a truer knowledge of the situation than was possessed by Captain Heald or even the trader Kinzie. The Pottawatomie showed his regard for his old friend by urging him to come no nearer Fort Dearborn, but to return with his Miamis to Fort Wayne. The captain thanked him and replied:

"I don't believe there is any hope, but I shall be in at the death, Black Partridge!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE FATEFUL MORNING

The morning of the 15th of August, 1812, dawned hot and sultry, like those that had preceded it for more than a week. Not enough air was stirring to cause a flutter in the flag which drooped from the staff of Fort Dearborn. At an early hour the waves of heat began shimmering over forest and plain, indicating that the day was to be one of the most uncomfortable of the season.

But never was greater activity seen about the old frontier post, the end of which was close at hand. The Indians that had camped on the plain were stirring before the first streakings of light appeared over Lake Michigan. Indeed, many did not lie down at all, but passed here and there, sometimes talking in low tones together, or stalking forth, as if some weighty matter was on their minds, as indeed was the fact.

The same bustle reigned within the stockades, for it was known to every one that Captain Nathan Heald, the commandant, and his garrison, would evacuate the fort at nine o'clock that morning. The stores had been distributed among the covetous redskins,

and but for the destruction of the whiskey their temper would have been much better. Yet it may be doubted whether such would have been the case after all, for we all know the devilish effects of alcohol upon aboriginal nature. The discontent had grown into hatred, and there were few among the soldiers and civilians who were not aware that the most terrible of perils threatened them.

Captain Wells and his twenty Miamis marched through the gate of the fort early in the morning and reported to Captain Heald, whose wife, as has been stated, was a niece of the famous scout. The grim countenance of the latter did not betray his emotions, and when Mrs. Heald came out on the porch, embraced and kissed the swarthy cheek (it is said by some that there was Indian blood in Wells), he smiled and returned the caress, for she was dear to him. In reply to her invitation to eat, he said he and his Miamis had partaken of food before coming to the fort. It was necessary that he should have an understanding with the captain, and, after a brief chat, he returned to where the commandant was giving directions to his officers and men.

The score of Miamis who had come into the parade ground were standing on the western side, stolid and grim, though everything that was going on in their field of vision was noted by them. Wells looked across and beckoned to the leader. He walked the brief

distance with a certain dignity, keeping his eyes all the time on the one who had summoned him to his side.

"Captain, this is my good friend, Chief Iron Hand; he has come with a few of his warriors to help escort you to Fort Wayne."

It was a time when friends were needed, and the commandant offered his hand to the redskin, who cordially shook it.

"I am afraid, Iron Hand, we shall need you and all your warriors; I wish we had a few hundred more of you."

The chieftain grinned, for he was pleased with the flattery.

"We 'nough," he said in broken English; "Winnebagoes dogs — cowards — we make 'em run, when we turn and look at them; Iron Hand not 'fraid, if dey like leaves on the trees."

"It does me good to hear you talk that way," replied the pleased officer; "we shall count on you to fight to the last, if trouble *does* come."

"Iron Hand do dat — all his warriors do dat — we sabe palefaces — none be hurt."

"You may if you please go back to your men," said Captain Wells, kindly; "the start will soon be made; Captain Heald is to have an escort of five hundred Pottawatomies, under their chief Black Partridge; the captain here will show you where you and your warriors are to march."

The chieftain, with the same deliberate, dignified step returned to the other side of the parade ground where the score of Miamis were drawn up like a class in school, awaiting the orders of their teacher.

"What do you think of him?" asked Wells, when the chieftain had passed beyond hearing.

"He talks all right and seems to be a brave fellow."

"I wouldn't give *that* for him," said Wells, impatiently snapping his fingers; "when the trouble begins he will be the first to run."

"Why then did you bring him, captain?" asked the commandant.

"Because I did not understand the situation; I didn't suppose there were half as many imps at Fort Dearborn as there are; Iron Hand and his warriors would fight well enough, provided our force was stronger than the enemy; he might do well, if it was simply equal, but when the proportion is like what it is, his heart is gone. Mark my words, captain, at the first firing of a gun the whole gang will run."

"You are not very comforting in your talk, captain."

"It's no time to mince words; we shall be attacked within five miles of the fort by the whole body of Indians."

"Black Partridge is their leader and has always been counted as our friend."

"He handed you his medal and told you he could no longer control his warriors."

"How did you learn that?" asked the surprised commandant.

"He told me so; we camped only a little way from here last night and Black Partridge made me a visit."

"He is certainly a friend to *you*," said Captain Heald, who knew of the peculiar relations between the two.

"I can't doubt him; he would risk his life for me, but he won't do it for any one else at the fort, though he is fond of young Kingdon and Judd."

"What did he tell you?"

"He repeated what he had said to you, but gave me a few particulars; the Pottawatomies will go with you for a mile or two, and then attack you; that will *wind* up the business," added the scout with a compression of his lips.

"My God, Wells!" exclaimed the agitated commandant; "if the whole thing is arranged as you say, I shall not surrender the fort at all; if we must make a fight for it, we can do better here than anywhere else."

"You ought to have thought of that before; it is too late now, for don't you see the redskins are everywhere, and as soon as they saw you had changed your mind the massacre was agreed upon."

"Do you mean to tell me that Black Partridge said to your face that we were to be cut down and that he was going to lead in the attack?"

"No; I didn't say that; he promised me to do all he could to check it."

"Has he any hope of success?"

"He professed to have, but I don't believe it."

It may be said that this answer decided the fate of Fort Dearborn. Had Captain Heald known of a surety that the attack would be made upon him and the garrison he would have fallen back on the desperate remedy named. He would have used strategy to get the Indians outside the gate through which they were continually swarming, and then, behind the wooden walls, he would have fought it out to the end.

But the words of Captain Wells rekindled the spark of hope in his breast. There were over half a hundred armed men, beside the score of Miamis; Black Partridge, the leader of the Indians, was personally well disposed toward the whites. It would seem that here was ground for hope of a safe issue from the troublous situation. Captain Wells, who regretted the result of his words, saw it was too late to recall them, even had he wished to do so; but he was one of the most truthful of men, and nothing could induce him to say that which he knew was not the fact.

Early that morning, Mr. Kinzie sent his family with two domestics and two Indians in a boat, they intending to cross the lake of St. Joseph. They remained at the mouth of the river, however, throughout the

events we are about to relate, returning to their home the following day. We have, therefore, no further concern with them.

The flag having been lowered, at precisely nine o'clock the garrison and the few civilians passed out of the gate, with their destination Fort Wayne, nearly two hundred miles away through the wilderness. The band, consisting of two shrill fifes and a drum, struck up the doleful "From the Dead March in Saul," which, to say the least, was not calculated to raise the spirits of those who already believed they were marching to their doom.

Captain Heald and his wife rode side by side on horseback, as did Lieutenant Helm and his wife. It should be added that Mrs. Heald was an excellent rifle shot, and carried a weapon with her. Mrs. Helm had no gun, but personally she was as brave as her friend. Behind the leaders rode Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd, both well mounted and prepared, so far as they could be prepared, for the peril closing round them. In advance of this party were the members of the garrison, keeping step, grim and determined, and in front of them were the Miamis. The Pottawatomies straggled at the rear of the several wagons, but those whom they were escorting would have been glad to dispense with their company altogether. Captain Wells rode to and fro, alert and watching everything. Sometimes he galloped a little

way in advance, then wheeled and returned, passed in front and alongside of the turbulent escort at the rear, closely noting the signs. His interest lay in this hideous horde, nearly all of whom were in war paint, straggling unevenly forward, uttering ugly threats, and becoming more demonstrative every minute.

Captain Wells was puzzled over what had become of his friend Black Partridge. He ought to have been among, or rather at the head of his Pottawatomies, but he was invisible. The scout put the worst construction on the fact.

"He knows what is coming and does not wish to witness it; before long the devils will break loose."

The captain's knowledge of the various Indian tongues enabled him to address a burly warrior on the edge of the horde.

"Where is your chief, Black Partridge?"

The Indian, without checking his swaggering walk, looked up at the lithe figure on horseback, and with an exasperating leer made answer:

"He is asleep in the woods; he is drunk; he won't wake till to-morrow."

With this reply, Captain Wells made an alarming discovery; the Pottawatomie with whom he was speaking was half intoxicated, and a number of those near at hand were in a similar condition. Despite the staving in of the whiskey kegs and the emptying of

their contents into the river, they had managed to get the stuff from somewhere.

Wells knew Black Partridge shared the weakness of his race regarding alcohol, but he did not believe what had just been told him. The chief was one who always rose to the responsibilities thrust upon him, and was the last man to commit such a folly at a time like the present.

The burly Pottawatomie who had made the reply held a rifle in his left hand, and now rested the other upon the handle of his hunting knife at his waist.

"White man git off hoss," he said with another leer, and forgetful that the captain had just spoken in his tongue; "we fight; white man dog — he coward — he squaw."

"I should like to have you for about five minutes beyond sight of this gang," muttered Wells, who had hard work to keep his anger in check; "I'd show you which is the squaw."

But it would have been the height of rashness to engage in a quarrel, which would have brought an overwhelming attack upon the scout, and precipitated the massacre. Wells pretended not to have heard the challenge, and to have more important matters on his mind, as most certainly was the fact. He turned his pony to gallop alongside the procession which was now strung out for two hundred yards.

At the moment of wheeling his animal, he heard

something whizz close to his ear. On the instant he knew what it meant. The warrior upon whom he had turned his back had hurled his tomahawk at him. Had the buck been sober, the missile must have cloven the head of Wells. Still, affecting to be unaware of the treachery of the savage, he rode up opposite the wagons, where he drew his animal down to a walk.

Captain Wells now took the stopper from his powder-horn and poured some of the particles in the palm of the other hand. Mixing spittle with this he smeared the stuff over his face. He did it deliberately until cheeks, chin, nose and forehead were stained of a black color.

The act corresponded to the death song of the Indian. It meant that all hope was gone, and the famous scout was ready for the doom that he knew was at hand.

CHAPTER XX

LIVELY WORK

When the procession drew out from Fort Dearborn it headed southward over an open plain, the intention being to march around the head of the lake, and press to the southeast through the wilderness to Fort Wayne. All were proceeding at a walk, the only exception being Captain Wells, who continued galloping to and fro, as if determined to keep track of everything.

After blacking his face as described, he wheeled to the right, and striking his horse into an easy gallop circled round his friends. This brought him quite near to Captain Heald and the rest. All looked up, expecting him to stop, but he passed them as if he saw them not. Each noticed the repulsive appearance of his face.

"What does uncle mean by that?" asked Mrs. Heald.

"You must know," replied her husband; "it signifies his preparation for death."

"What a strange thing for him to do!"

"He has a good many Indian superstitions."

"That isn't the only strange thing he is doing; where is he going?"

Captain Wells, having passed the head of the procession, still kept on to the south over the level plain.

"Auric," said the distressed Mrs. Heald; "I wish you would hurry after uncle and bring him back; he acts as if he had lost his head."

The request was made on the impulse of the moment, and was instantly regretted. Neither Captain Heald nor Lieutenant Helm liked it, but they said nothing. To Auric Kingdon the request had the force of a command. He twitched the rein of his pony, struck his heels against his sides, and was off like an arrow, neither he nor Jethro Judd at his side saying a parting word to each other.

Auric had not ridden more than fifty paces when a series of shouts and the sound of tramping feet made him look around. Fully a score of warriors were running after him. Thus Captain Wells was leading, the youth following a short distance behind, while, with a still less interval separating them, the band of Indians were bearing down upon the young American, who was mystified.

Resourceful as was our young friend, he was at a loss as to what was the best thing for him to do. What meant this strange pursuit of the two? It looked as if the excited redskins intended to cut him and Wells off from the rest of the party.

But, if so, the scout must have read the design. Why then did he not wheel about and either charge through the group or flank them?

Manifestly it would not do for Auric to attempt to return until the veteran did so. He slackened the speed of his horse, keeping an eye on his friend in front, as well as his enemies in the rear, ready to do the right thing the moment he could find what that right thing was.

Suddenly Captain Wells checked his steed, drew him around, and then charged at full speed upon the red footmen, who were still hooting and yelling and running toward the two. Auric drew rein and was more dumfounded than ever.

"Shall I help you charge?" shouted the youth, as the scout with the face of a negro thundered past.

The captain called back something, but Auric failed to catch what it was, and the command, not being repeated, was lost.

The next moment the Indians were on all sides of the scout. Auric saw him reach over from his saddle, and with his clubbed gun strike viciously at the leading warrior. The scout was aflame with anger and shouted:

"Cowards! dogs! squaws! you are worse than the Pottawatomies!"

And then the truth flashed upon Auric. The party which had dashed after the two in such desperate

haste were the Miamis, whom Captain Wells had brought from Fort Wayne to help escort the garrison thither. They had not waited for the first gun to be fired or for a blow to be struck, but, seeing that it was coming, they broke in a panic, and, led by Iron Hand himself, were fleeing hot-footed for their lives.

It was the chieftain himself at whom Captain Wells struck, but the nimble savage dodged the blow and continued his flight southward at the highest bent of his speed. Had the situation been less appalling, it would have been amusing.

The young American was still nonplussed. Surely it was not his place to attack the Miamis, when his help would soon be needed against more dangerous redskins. They were of no account, and might as well be allowed to leave without hindrance.

But Captain Wells thought different. Not only in the presence of Captain Heald had Iron Hand pledged that he and his warriors would stand by the garrison to the death, but he had said the same a score of times while on the way from Fort Wayne. At the moment, the rage of the scout was greater against this cowardly chief than against the Pottawatomies and Winnebagoes. He knew what to expect from *them*, but he had begun to believe there might be something in the boasts of Iron Hand. Had he held his ground, his warriors would have done the same for a time at least, but his example destroyed all hope of anything of that nature.

Impelled by his tempestuous anger, Wells headed his horse after the flying chief, determined to ride him down and to shatter his skull as punishment for his cowardice. It was a rash thing to do, for any one of the warriors could have shot the pursuer from his steed. Such would have been the issue, had not every one of the Miamis been smitten with a terror which made them think only of themselves and safety.

Singling out Iron Hand, the captain charged after him with his animal on a full run. The terrified fugitive, seeing there was no escape, and forgetful that he had a loaded gun in his hand, faced about and began abjectly pleading for his life. Had he put up a fight the horseman would have slain him then and there, but he could not kick the dog that cringed at his feet. The black face assumed an expression of unutterable disgust, as Captain Wells checked his horse, gazed down at the miserable wretch, and then, turning his back on the whole party, galloped off to join his friends.

In doing this, the scout seemed to be wholly unconscious of the presence of Auric Kingdon. Under his whirlwind of emotion he was thinking of larger things. The incident was of small moment, however, and the youth was on the point of riding after him, when he became involved in a remarkable experience.

Not all the Miamis ran with equal speed. Iron Hand took the lead and kept it. The moment the

indignant Captain Wells turned away he was off like a deer, and quickly placed himself in the van of the panic-stricken fugitives. The last glimpse of the chief showed him going at his highest speed over the plain. We have no record of the time thus spent, but he must have kept it up long after he was beyond danger.

Two of the Miamis lagged to that extent that they were close to Auric Kingdon when he decided to follow Wells in his return to the main company. Before the direction of the animal could be changed, one of these bucks struck the flank of the pony such a resounding slap, that he plunged southward as if in pursuit of the flying Iron Hand.

The angered rider yanked viciously at the reins, but, before he could get the mastery of the frightened animal, the second Miami came up on the other side and sharply pricked the flank of the animal with the point of his hunting-knife. He probably did so in a spirit of deviltry, for he could not have expected to accomplish anything by the act.

The horse instantly became uncontrollable. He dashed after the flying redskins, the bit between his teeth and in a frenzy of panic. Auric was a good horseman, and by steadily tugging at one rein he succeeded at last in bringing the animal around.

The youth's whole efforts were so centred upon this task that for the time he saw and thought of

nothing else. The consequence was that his pony, while leaving his first two tormentors behind, galloped directly among three others, who were making the best time they could for Fort Wayne. The lad knew nothing of this until a peculiar cry fell upon his ear. His pony had struck a Miami warrior with his hoofs and knocked him to the earth. It was this slight interruption which enabled Auric to master his frightened animal, who was partly checked by the incident.

The buck who had been knocked down was not much hurt, but the occurrence threw him into a fury. Leaping to his feet, he whipped out his tomahawk and struck viciously at the youth, who by the greatest effort dodged the blow. The Miami must have believed he had been run down intentionally.

"What the mischief is the matter with you?" demanded the youth, who, having his rifle at command, swung it round with his right hand without bringing the weapon to his shoulder. The distance was so slight that no aim was necessary.

And then what did the copper-hued coward do but bellow for mercy, and start off as if determined to catch his chief who was scooting over the plain?

"Of all the infernal cowards I ever heard of you are the worst!" exclaimed the amazed Auric; "what ever led Captain Wells to put any trust —"

The youth had forgotten the two Miamis on the

other side of his horse. He was reminded of their presence in the most startling manner. One of them seized his leg and began dragging him from the saddle. Auric fiercely resisted, but he was at great disadvantage and could not save himself. He had barely time to draw his feet from the stirrups, when out he went, unhorsed with such suddenness that he staggered and fell to his knees.

He had succeeded in keeping his gun in hand, but did not wish to use it until forced to do so. Similarly armed were the two Miamis, and there was no reason why they should not shoot him down. Indeed, they could have brained him, or used their knives with fatal effect, while he was regaining his feet.

The instant Auric had done this, he grasped his gun with both hands and faced his enemies. Then, incredible as it may seem, they seemed to think they had important business at Fort Wayne and hastily joined the procession heading thither!

But it was not yet plain sailing for Auric Kingdon. He was gazing after the scurrying fugitives when, to his amazement, his horse, which had been standing obediently near, though much flustered over what had taken place, dashed off in the same direction. A glance at the animal gave the explanation: unsuspected by the owner, another Miami, who seemed to spring from the ground, had leaped into the saddle and was speeding like a whirlwind for Fort Wayne.

"Shoot him, Auric! Quick or he'll get away from you!"

It was Jethro Judd who shouted these words, as he came toward his comrade with his pony on a full run. He had seen that his friend was involved in trouble, and when Captain Wells returned without him, Jethro hurried to the help of the one whom he loved as his own life.

Auric brought his gun to his shoulder, but immediately lowered it. He couldn't think it justifiable to shoot a Miami Indian merely because he was stealing a horse. Beside, the consequences might be bad when the Pottawatomies heard the report of a gun.

"You have got a good horse, Jet; run him down; he won't show any fight," said Auric, as his friend came up.

"All right," responded Jethro, who shot past without checking his steed.

A few minutes later, Jethro awoke to the unpleasant fact that the pony which he bestrode was no fleeter than the one he was chasing. All that the Miami had to do was to keep him at his best paces, and he was safe against being overtaken. Through some whim either the horse or the rider turned to the west, so that the couple diverged from the line of flight made by the fleeing Miamis, who, by this time, were scattered at varying distances over the plain.

The moment Jethro Judd sped by his friend, the

latter broke into a run after him. Thus a warrior mounted on one pony was going swiftly southward, with a white youth pursuing him on horseback, while a third pursuer, in the person of Auric Kingdon, was bringing up the rear on foot. In such circumstances, there was no earthly show for the last, unless something unexpected checked the flight of the advance horseman.

In this instance it was not the unexpected that happened. The Miami kept his saddle and urged his pilfered animal so vigorously that it did not take Jethro long to see he had undertaken a hopeless task. He drew rein, and, turning back to meet his panting friend, said with a laugh:

"I'm sorry, old fellow, but I don't believe you'll ever see that horse again."

And it may be said that Auric Kingdon never did see him again.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ATTACK

From the moment of the abandonment of Fort Dearborn the procession moved slowly to the southward. As has been stated, it traversed an open plain, the intention being to pass around the head of Lake Michigan, and over the old trail to Fort Wayne. The signs of hostility on the part of the escorting Pottawatomies became more marked with every rod of advance. The watchful Captain Wells saw that it was likely to break out at any moment, and that it was as certain to take place as was the setting of the summer sun. Hence his blackening of his face as a sign that he had given up all hope of escape for himself.

The company had reached a point a little over a mile from the fort, when the hundreds of Pottawatomies drew off, hurried forward, and disappeared behind a long, low sand hill between the whites and the lake. It was a terrifying proceeding and no one could mistake its meaning. The route led directly in front of this ridge, and the redskins meant to attack the whites when they came within range.

True, the soldiers might have circled farther to the

right, but that would have only postponed the assault. The fight must be made with the defenders in the open, and one place was as good as another.

Captain Wells galloped up to Captain Heald.

"They are about to attack! Get ready as quick as you can!"

Heald issued his orders with military terseness. The wagons were brought together, so as to form an irregular circle, within which were placed the horses, while the soldiers prepared to fire from behind the rude defences. In one of the large covered wagons the women and children were placed, its station being such that it was better protected against the flying bullets than any other of the vehicles.

Hurried as were these movements, they were not completed when the historical attack opened. The Pottawatomies fired a scattering volley from the crest of the ridge, but the distance was too great for the shots to do any damage. The thud of several bullets was heard as they struck the woodwork, and one of the missiles, by some odd freak, pierced the flank of the horse that seemed the best protected of all the animals. He uttered a whinney of pain, and reared and plunged so violently that it was some time before he could be quieted.

It was an alarming sight when twenty or thirty heads of the assailants appeared in one place, dropped out of view, and then bobbed up and peered over at

another part of the crest. Possibly the latter heads belonged to other warriors.

No more terrifying picture can be imagined than that which opened before the eyes of the defenders within the next ten minutes. There were certainly between four and five hundred Pottawatomies, with a few members of other tribes, crouching behind the ridge, with guns loaded, eagerly awaiting the moment when the whites should come within range. Seeing that they would not do so, and that they were intrenching themselves, so to speak, the redskins came out from cover and advanced against them. It looked as if a thousand painted bricks swarmed over the summit, but instead of charging in a body they dispersed, keeping well out on the plain, afraid of the shots that were awaiting them. They separated more and more until the wagons were enclosed on every side.

It will be remembered that the assailants outnumbered the defenders ten to one, that the latter were handicapped by the care of their women and children, and the considerable amount of luggage and stores brought from the fort. Moreover, the protection offered by the vehicles on the open plain was so imperfect that the situation of the whites was hopeless from the first.

The Indians began drawing nearer. Nothing could surpass the awful nature of their attack. Several of

the leaders were on horseback, but they kept at a safe distance, urging their warriors to press closer every minute. Instead of making a dashing charge, which would have swept everything before it, the bucks, when they approached range, dropped on their faces and crept forward, firing from that position, and aiming with such effect that in a short time they killed several horses, and two soldiers, besides wounding three more.

It need not be said that every white man who possessed a firearm did his best with it. Captain Heald, Lieutenant Helm, and others fought with coolness, firing as often as they could load and aim. The one who did the most execution was Captain Wells. He stood behind the rear wheel of one of the wagons, and sighted with as much care as if he were practising at a shooting match. Rarely or never did he miss. Selecting his man, who probably lay at full length on the prairie, he made sure of his aim, and when he pulled trigger, that same buck was pretty certain to emit a yell, leap grotesquely in air, or roll over on his back, and that was the last of him.

Standing thus, only partly screened by the tire and spokes of the wheel, the scout himself served as a target for more than one Pottawatomie sharpshooter. Twice the spokes were struck, and once the splinters knocked from the tire stung his face. But he did not shift his position, nor did he try to lessen the danger

by imitating his foes, as most of those around him were doing.

It was the custom of Captain Wells to pick out his next victim while loading his gun. For his seventh he fixed upon a tall, sinewy warrior, who, although not as far to the front as the others, was evidently a leader that was directing them. He had left his horse, and proved his bravery by entering the zone of danger, from which the others took care to keep clear.

"I think I'll wing you the next time," was the decision of Wells, as he pulled back the flint of his rifle; "you don't seem to think you are within reach; you may not be so for others, but you're just where *I* want you."

With his usual coolness he drew bead on the unsuspicious redskin, and his finger was pressing the trigger, when he suddenly checked himself.

"By the horned spoon, that was the narrowest escape you ever had, Black Partridge!" muttered the scout, with a slight shiver; "if I had picked you off, it would have been the fault of that confounded paint you have daubed over your pretty face!"

When the two friends had their talk together the night before, the paint was not visible in the shade of the woods, and Captain Wells in truth was not aware of the chief's disfigurement. But there was something about the Pottawatomie which revealed

Captain Wells in the Attack *Page* 234

his identity at the critical moment. An instant later and it would have been too late.

The discovery suggested to the scout that he may have really seen the sachem among his warriors on the march, but failed to identify him. He was probably trying to keep out of the sight of his old friend, and succeeded to the extent of escaping recognition.

"I don't know, Black Partridge, that I hadn't ought to shoot you as it is, for you've no business where you are, but I shouldn't feel quite right, for I don't believe you want to kill me."

Without shifting his position in the slightest, Captain Wells diverted his aim the fraction of an inch to one side, and selected a warrior who was stretched on the ground, just to the right of the chief.

"He'll do as well as you."

Amid the reports of the guns around him, the sharp crack of the scout's long rifle was heard, and the redskin whom he had in his eye sprang to his feet, leaped in air, and then sprawled forward with his arms flung over the legs of Black Partridge, who kicked himself free, and maintained his position as before.

In the account of this remarkable fight on the prairie, justice must be done to the women, who displayed a bravery and coolness that could not be surpassed. It has been told that Mrs. Heald, when she rode out from the fort, carried a rifle, and that she was noted among her friends as an expert shot. Her

husband urged her to give her whole care to sheltering herself from the bullets that were flying faster every minute, and told her and Mrs. Helm that, if they would enter the wagon containing the children, and keep their bodies below the heavy wooden sides, no harm would befall them.

Both refused to act on the advice.

"Every shot is needed," said Mrs. Heald; "I know I have brought down one or two, and think I am good for a few more."

"You may be a better shot than I," added Mrs. Helm, to her husband; "but if one keeps his senses, he can't well miss. You two and the rest should fight all you can and give no attention to us."

These heroic women stationed themselves behind the wagon in which cowered the awed little ones, where they might have found refuge, but declined it, and loaded, aimed, and fired with the coolness of veterans.

The testimony of the aged Volney Burgess, who died at Fort Wayne, at the opening of the Civil War, is of peculiar interest. He was a private soldier in the famous massacre, and always condemned Captain Heald for refusing to follow the advice of his officers to remain in Fort Dearborn.

"Had he done so," said Mr. Burgess, "there never would have been a massacre. If Lieutenant Helm had revolted, as we all hoped he would do, the

garrison would have stood by him to a man, but we had no choice but to obey orders.

"When the fight on the prairie opened I followed the advice of Captain Heald and lay down, all of us loading and firing at will. When we had fought for twenty minutes I began to feel more hope than at any time since leaving the fort. It is true we were surrounded by the Indians, who kept up the hottest kind of a fire, but we were fairly well protected, and were standing them off. None of us was panic-stricken, and we were killing as many of them as they were of us. In fact, I think we were doing better, for, aside from their superior numbers, the advantage was with us.

"Every minute or two I would hear a cry from one of the fellows near me, and I knew what it meant; he had been knocked out of the business forever; but, as I said, the Pottawatomies were losing their bucks faster than we. An Indian can't stand the gaff, and I was looking for them to drop back out of range and fix up some other plan for our undoing, when they did the thing which none of us expected, and which their race don't often do.

"First, there was a lot of yells which, beginning directly in our front, made a complete circle round us. I recognized them as the shouts of the chiefs, and knew they were orders of some kind. The leaders were mostly on horseback, though some, like Black

Partridge, mingled with the warriors and took even chances with them.

"A minute later the meaning of the shouts was seen. It was an order for a general charge and it was obeyed with enthusiasm. The Indians were tired of having their men picked off, while able to do nothing, and they summoned up enough courage to respond to the commands of their chiefs. Almost as one man they leaped to their feet, and, adding their yells to those of their leaders, came down upon us like a tornado.

"It seemed only a few seconds when they were among us, and we were all fighting hand to hand, like so many tigers. I couldn't see much of what was going on around me, for I had my hands full, but in the swirl and hell of conflict I partially saw one of the most frightful crimes that was ever perpetrated.

"A brawny warrior suddenly bounded out from among his companions, tomahawk in hand, and, with an ear-splitting screech, leaped into the rear of the wagon containing the children, several of whom had betrayed themselves by peeping out on the dreadful scene around them. He could not have been in the wagon more than three minutes, yet, when he sprang out again, he did not leave a live child behind him!

"I don't know how many were killed, but have heard it placed as high as a dozen. It was the work

of a fiend, so horrifying that only one man in our company realized what had been done. He was Captain Wells, who saw the demon drop to the ground, and start off to join his companions. Before he could do so, Wells reached him, and with one blow from his clubbed musket brought him dead to the ground.

"Before this the famous scout had been recognized by many of the Pottawatomies and there was a general rush for him. He placed his back against the side of the wagon in which the bodies of the innocents lay, and for some minutes hewed a place clear in front of him. His hat had dropped off, the streaming perspiration washed streaks through the moistened gunpowder which he had smeared over it, and his eyes were aflame. He was a magnificent specimen of strength and activity, and formed a picture which I shall remember to my dying day.

"I was so awed by the sight that I determined to force my way to his side and stand by him to the last. But I had taken only a couple of paces when it seemed that a red-hot needle was thrust into my thigh, my leg twisted under me, and I came to the ground like a tipped-over stone. I had been shot and couldn't stand.

"My fall was so sudden that my gun, which I had not had time to reload, flew from my hands. Like a flash it came over me that my only hope lay in feigning death. The Indians were after live men, and had no

time to give attention to dead ones. No one can conceive the frightful turmoil, noise, and confusion. I rolled over on my face, with hands outstretched and doubled under me, as if every spark of life had fled.

"The trick succeeded for the time, but I had lain thus for only a brief while, when the toe or heel of some one struck my side, and the person went down beside me, with a groan which I knew was his last. It was some minutes before I dared move my head enough to get a peep at him. When I did so I saw the grimy face of Captain Wells, who had died like the hero he was."

CHAPTER XXII

A BORDER HEROINE

THE only man among those that were making such a brave fight for their lives who understood the meaning of the series of shouts which travelled round the doomed band was Captain Wells.

"They are going to charge!" he exclaimed, though hardly any one heard the words in the din of the firing.

The scout had just struck a "target" again. Without pausing to reload his weapon he dashed to the wagon where Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm were doing the same as he had been industriously doing. The husbands of both were some paces away, absorbed in their work of directing the soldiers and firing their own guns.

"You must get out of this place," called the captain, addressing both; "the devils will be here in a minute or two."

"But, uncle, how can we get out?" asked Mrs. Heald, holding her powder-horn ready to pour the grains into the pan of her rifle.

"Mount your horses, and wait till the Pottawatomies

start; they won't come in a solid mass; there will be openings here and there; make a dash through one of these."

"Where shall we go?" asked Mrs. Heald, who, truth to tell, showed less agitation than the veteran scout.

"Back to the fort, down the river, *anywhere*, so you get as far away as you can from *here!*"

The steed of Mrs. Heald was one of the best in the company; he was fastened only a few paces away, and, as yet, was unharmed. He was saddled and bridled, the halter being tied to the hind wheel of one of the wagons.

Mrs. Helm's animal was in a different direction. Knowing, like her companion, that Captain Wells was the best one to advise in such an awful crisis, she hastened to her horse, while Mrs. Heald and her relative were giving attention to the other. The scout showed what he thought of the value of time, when, without pausing to untie the halter, he cut it with a single stroke of his knife.

"You haven't a second to spare," he added, his head so close to that of his niece that she caught his words. He helped her into the saddle and she caught up the reins.

"Is your gun loaded?" he asked, without glancing at the pan.

"Partly."

"Throw it away; it can't be of any help to you;

watch for an opening and when you see it do as I told you — dash through it. Here they come!"

Captain Wells could do no more for her, and turned to look for Mrs. Helm. Something like a panic seized the soldiers when they saw the painted hordes running down upon them from every point of the compass. There was dashing to and fro, several of the men in their wild panic breaking through the lines and running blindly to meet the Pottawatomies. He could see nothing of Mrs. Helm.

"She heard me say what they ought to do; there's no time to look for her."

And then the ranger resumed his fighting, to fall a few minutes later, as has already been related.

Rebecca Heald proved herself a worthy relative of this intrepid pioneer of the border. Among the terrified swarm, none was more self-possessed than she. She sat erect, firmly poised in the saddle, and looked calmly out over the plain at the horrible horde charging down upon them. She was a handsome woman, admired by every officer and soldier at Fort Dearborn. If any one had paused amid the fearful hurly-burly to look at her he would have seen the thin lips tightly compressed, the cheeks a little paler than was their wont, while the fine dark eyes had a flash that some remembered to have seen when she was stirred by unusual excitement. But there was not a tremor of so much as an eyelid.

With a coolness which approached the marvellous, the woman was looking for the opening of which she meant to take advantage, as urged to do by her uncle, Captain Wells. It was the only possible hope, and you need not be told that it was of the most desperate nature: the chances were a hundred to one that it would not avail her.

Directly in front, the howling Pottawatomies were coming in such a dense mass that she would have been overthrown before she could gallop a dozen paces, but a little to the left a partially open space showed, as if two divisions of an army were charging at the same point, and each preserving its separate formation.

Naturally her horse was in a tremor of excitement, for he was facing a scene such as he had never faced before and was never to be called to face again. But he was highly trained and was obedient to his mistress. She held the reins firmly, and even patted his neck reassuringly.

Suddenly she twitched the bridle, and turned his head to the left. He sprang forward at a canter. She jerked the reins again, and the canter became a run. The horde was on her right and on her left. Two warriors were coming toward her and were directly in her path. She tried to draw aside and only partially succeeded. One of the bucks dodged from the front of her horse, just in time to save himself. He glanced up as if he failed to understand what the

strange action meant. Then he raised his gun and fired at her. The wonder is she was not instantly killed. As it was, the bullet passed through her forearm. She hardly felt the twinge of pain in the tensity of the moment, but the blood began trickling down over her wrist and hand. It made no difference, for, as cool as ever, she urged her animal forward.

She might have forced her way through the line, for the savages were charging so closely together that the space was comparatively brief, but an element entered into the strange effort which had never occurred to her until that moment. It has been said that the steed upon which she was mounted was an unusually fine one. Indeed, there was none at Fort Dearborn that could be compared with him. He would have been a prize for a prince.

The second warrior whom Mrs. Heald encountered was seized with a sudden covetousness for the animal, whose speed had been stopped for an instant by the interruption named. Before he could spring forward again, this Pottawatomie seized his bridle. The rider urged her horse, who would have responded, and carried her perhaps to safety, had not the painted miscreant caught the wounded hand, and with a wrenching jerk brought her from the saddle to the ground.

The woman landed on her feet, and the warrior, whose other hand still grasped the bridle, let go of

his prisoner and raised his tomahawk. Looking him calmly in the face, she said reproachfully:

"You would not kill a squaw, who is already wounded."

She remembered to have seen the Pottawatomie at the fort, although she did not know his name, nor had she ever before spoken to him. Her words were English, but he understood the appeal. She hardly expected mercy from him, but providentially her prayer was uttered at the psychological moment. He paused in the fearful act, and then shoved the handle of his tomahawk back in the girdle at his waist. She followed up her strange advantage by saying:

"I knew you would not harm me; you are welcome to my horse."

The savage captor completed his merciful act in a way which it is hard to explain or understand. Instead of accepting the offer of the animal, he said:

"You ride hoss — me help."

He offered his hand, and with slight aid she climbed into the saddle. Then he directed her to ride in advance, indicating the way by a gesture. It was hard to believe that he meant to befriend her, but she wisely obeyed him. The warriors were so numerous about her that she was at a loss how to direct her horse. Seeing her trouble he grasped the bridle rein, and began leading him out on the open plain.

Where every one was so absorbed in the whirlwind of events, no one paid attention for the time to the couple. That this Indian was one of authority was proved by the manner in which those who chanced to be in his way made room for him. He was probably a chief, though of less authority than Black Partridge.

Mrs. Heald feared that he meant to carry out his fearful purpose when they should get clear of the horde, but she did not wholly abandon hope. The thought that came to this remarkable woman was:

"When he is ready to use his tomahawk he will let go my bridle; I will then give rein to my horse and may escape."

But sooner than she expected he released his hold. Facing about he said:

"Go dere — head ob ribber; canoe dere — go!"

She was not quite clear as to what he meant, but she acted upon the advice without an instant's delay. She was directed toward the mouth of the river and she believed the warrior had some good purpose in thus advising her. Being well clear of the Indians by this time she struck her animal into a swinging gallop. She glanced back to see whether she was pursued, but nothing of that nature appeared. It would have caused her little fear had she seen a dozen Indians galloping after her, for she knew none was so well mounted as she, and it would not require much effort to leave all behind.

Her wound was painful, but not dangerous. It had stopped bleeding, and, like a true heroine of the border, she gave it little thought. She maintained her rapid pace until she reached the mouth of the river, where, to her astonishment, she perceived the large boat in which the family of the trader Kinzie had started for St. Joseph. They had reached the point named, when a party of Indians appeared on the bank and forbade them going any farther. The escort did not dare disobey the command, and the craft was lying near shore, awaiting with throbbing hearts the issue of the fight that was going on near them.

Mrs. Heald was taken aboard and given a warm welcome. It was a relief to know that she at least had been spared, when so many had fallen. She was obliged to leave her animal behind, and he probably fell into the possession of some of the Indians. She would have been glad had the owner been the warrior who had shown her such unexpected mercy, but whether or not such was the fact she was never able to learn.

It may be added that Mrs. Heald lived nearly a half century after this incident, dying at an advanced age in Chicago. Her remarkable story was heard by many persons who are still living there.

CHAPTER XXIII

THROUGH THE FIRE

If the experience of Mrs. Heald was trying to the last degree, that of Mrs. Helm, wife of the second officer at Fort Dearborn, was in some respects still more so.

When, in obedience to the urgency of Captain Wells, she separated from her friend, it was with the resolve to make a similar attempt to hers. Had the means been provided, this would have been done with results that can hardly be conjectured, though it is hard to think of any way by which she could have extricated herself from the perils by which she was surrounded.

Brief as was the distance she had to pass to reach the spot where her horse had been tied only a short time before, she was shocked to find the animal dead. He seemed to have been struck by more than one flying bullet, and lay motionless on his side as he had probably lain for some minutes. She was so unprepared for this, that she stood for several seconds amid the fearful din and turmoil, stunned, bewildered, and at a loss what to do. She threw her unloaded gun

aside as only an incumbrance. Since she could not make her intended dash on horseback, as she intended to do, there was but one recourse left to her, — that was to try it on foot.

One of the horrifying features of that memorable struggle was that in a twinkling, as may be said, the fight became one in which every person had to be for himself. No one was given the chance to help another. Alas, in too many cases, he could not help himself. Captain Heald would have given his life for his wife, but the opportunity was denied him. He could not see where she was, nor could he guess what had become of her. The same is to be said of Lieutenant Helm. He lost sight of Mrs. Helm the instant after she left her place at the rear of the wagon, where she was coolly firing upon the Pottawatomies, and not until a long time after, when he had abandoned all hope, did he learn of her frightful experience.

The woman had hardly turned to carry out her resolution, when she was caught seemingly in the very vortex of the mäelstrom. She could not have taken more than three or four steps, on the alert for an opening, when a young warrior who was on foot leaped toward her with tomahawk upraised. The woman was a natural athlete and sprang aside, but the blow fell on her shoulder. As he came forward, she threw an arm around his neck, and strove to get possession of his scalping knife. Could she have

done so she would have buried it in his body, and speedily ended the struggle, so far as that particular miscreant was concerned. She was nerved by unnatural strength and came within a hair of succeeding, but it may be doubted whether an ordinary woman ever overcame a brawny warrior in a struggle, such as lasted for a few dreadful moments.

Mrs. Helm must have been slain, for the Indian drew just far enough away from her to give free swing to his hand, and was in the act of using his tomahawk again, when the upraised arm was griped from the rear, and he was hurled to one side by another Pottawatomie, who shouted:

"Her scalp is mine! Leave her to me!"

The other made a motion as if to resent this interference, but, recognizing the Indian, slunk sullenly away.

The dazed prisoner could offer no resistance and meekly accompanied her captor, who led her in the direction of the lake. She believed he intended to drown her, but saw no way of helping herself. Several others who seemed to have noticed the incident stared after them.

Mrs. Helm knew enough Pottawatomie to understand the fearful words that had been uttered by her last captor. She walked by his side until they came to the edge of the lake. Then he grasped her arm and dragged her in beside him.

She did not protest, for all hope was gone. When the water reached to her waist he made as if to force her under. Her resistance was wholly instinctive. The water was cool and grateful, and, in obedience to that singular weakness of our nature which leads us to observe the most trifling incidents in moments of greatest peril, she noted that the water was washing the partly coagulated blood from her wound. Then she looked at two Indians who stood on the shore and watched her and her captor.

The captor paused a moment, and angrily commanded them to join their comrades in their fight with the white men. One hurried off as if scared by the indignant words, but the other held his ground.

The Pottawatomie resumed his efforts to force her head under water. By this time the resistance of the prisoner hardly showed itself. Since she must die, death by drowning was a thousand times preferable to what many of her friends had to suffer. Besides, the warrior made no offer to scalp her or offer her any indignity.

Mrs. Helm's head went under, but in an instant was lifted up again, even before her breath had gone. Again she was "ducked," but, as before, the Pottawatomie made sure that she had plenty of air to breathe.

Incredible as it at first seemed, the Indian was only pretending to drown her!

When the farce had lasted several minutes he led her to shore. All this time he did not speak, and the woman began to ask herself whether she was awake or dreaming. But she was soon standing on dry land in her dripping garments, and her master released his hold of her.

The point at which they had emerged was within a few paces of the single Pottawatomie who had refused to obey the command to join his comrades farther out on the plain. The captor now spoke to him in his own tongue, which it will be borne in mind was understood by the prisoner:

"Take her to the mouth of the river and give her to the Kinzies; if you do not I will kill you!"

"I will lead her there," was the answer; then, addressing the woman, the other said in broken English:

"Come wid me — won't hurt — take good care!"

For the first time, Mrs. Helm looked intently into the face of the warrior who had led her into the lake and then brought her out again. Despite the fantastic smearing of the paint over his grim features, she was sure she saw the ghost of a smile as their eyes met. He did not speak, and evidently was waiting for her to say something.

"O Black Partridge!" she exclaimed, "I never dreamed it was *you*."

"Go with Red Feather — take care — he no hurt!"

"I will do anything you wish; I cannot tell you how thankful I am!"

The chief was turning away, when she called imploringly.

"Black Partridge, you have proved yourself a friend; won't you do more?"

"No 'fraid Red Feather — he won't hurt," replied the Pottawatomie, again smiling in his odd way at her alarm, and mistaking her meaning.

"It isn't for me I am speaking, — it is for my husband, Lieutenant Helm and Captain Heald, and Mrs. Heald, and all that you can save! O my good friend, you will not forget them!"

She reached out to take hold of his arm, but the chieftain did not like this display of emotion. He moved away, without replying. The shots and cries from the scene of the battle so near at hand acquired a sudden interest for him. He would not listen further, but, breaking into a lope, passed up the bank, never once looking back to see what had become of her and the escort to whom he had entrusted the woman.

It has already been said that Mr. Kinzie, the trader, sent his family down the river in charge of two friendly Indians, the intention being to padddle across the lake to St. Joseph. At the mouth of the stream, a party of warriors appeared on the bank and ordered them to go no farther until they had permission. Red Feather, as he had been instructed, conducted the

woman to this place, and she was welcomed by the little group of fugitives, who trembled for hours in dread of the fate that threatened them. Mrs. Heald had been there some time before the arrival of her companion.

In performing this task it is fair to believe that Red Feather did an agreeable duty, though there were few white people toward whom he felt anything like friendship.

No men could have put up a braver fight than Captain Heald and his soldiers, but after the capture of his horses and baggage, and the steady gains of their assailants, the commandant saw that to continue the struggle meant the annihilation of every white person. More than half the soldiers had been killed, beside that awful slaughter of the innocents, when he called to Black Partridge, just after he had come from the lake, that he would consider the question of surrender. Had the captain known of the kindness that had just been shown the wife of Lieutenant Helm, and the fact that Mrs. Heald had also been spared, he would have felt less hesitation in making the proposal.

Black Partridge now assumed his rôle as the true leader of the large band of Indians. He had convinced the warriors by his conduct that he was as eager as they for the destruction of the whole company, and they were ready to obey him in every

respect. If they had passed beyond his control some time before, he had brought them under it again, through his remarkable tactfulness.

At the shouted command of Black Partridge, the firing ceased almost immediately. The Indians fell back a number of rods, but kept within range, so that, if called upon, they could renew the struggle at any moment. The lust of blood flamed in the serpent-like eyes, and no doubt many of them believed the surrender, if accepted by their leader, would be followed by the massacre of every man and woman. Such was the rule among the aborigines, and, with a chieftain of less character than Black Partridge, it would have been so in this case.

It was an impressive picture upon which all now looked. More than a score and a half of soldiers and civilians were stretched lifeless on the sand among the wagons; a number of horses had been killed; a solitary vehicle contained the dozen innocents slain by a single dusky fiend; here and there lay the painted, inanimate forms on the open plain, and beyond and among them stood the scowling warriors, a number on horseback, awaiting the issue of the lull that had come almost as suddenly as the fight itself.

From among this group of Indians a single individual strode forth. He was in his war paint, and, although his knife and tomahawk were with him, his rifle was left among his followers. No flag of truce

was displayed, for the situation was too well understood by all concerned to make it necessary.

Black Partridge walked forward with a certain dignity, until within a dozen paces of the surviving soldiers, when he stopped and waited for Captain Heald to meet him. That officer had supposed that the chieftain would come directly among the white men, and there was no reason why he should not do so, for he had nothing to fear. In taking the course which he did, it looked as if he wished to exchange a few words with the captain beyond earshot of the others.

"Well, Black Partridge," said the officer, as he made a military salute and approached to within a couple of paces, "it looks as if we can no longer help ourselves."

The couple were of precisely the same height, and each looked fixedly into the face of the other. The fact that the Pottawatomie lowered his voice was taken by Captain Heald as proof that he meant their talk to be confidential. While the words were in broken English on the part of the Pottawatomie, we will follow our rule of putting them in smoother form for him.

Ignoring the remark just made, Black Partridge said:

"The wife of Captain Heald and the wife of Lieutenant Helm have not been hurt."

While this was not strictly true, the chief did not mean to deceive the captain. He wished to inform the officer that the two women had not been slain, and were in no danger of losing their lives. The relief which the assurance gave cannot be imagined, for both officers had given up hope regarding their wives. Captain Heald did not doubt the truth of the assurance and the tears filled his eyes.

"We know that it is due to *you*, Black Partridge, and the lieutenant and I can never tell you how thankful we are."

Most persons in the situation of the commandant of Fort Dearborn would have tried to formulate some excuse for the contradictory course of the Pottawatomie, with a view of conciliating him, but the captain had the tact to refrain. Black Partridge was not seeking the commendation of him or any other white man. While it must be believed that the dusky leader would have shown a more friendly spirit had he been at liberty to do so, he was not wholly dissatisfied with what had been done. He had simply gone out of his way to befriend one or two of the whites, and he was willing now to obey to some extent the laws of civilized warfare.

"You must surrender, captain, — you and all your men."

"We will do so on condition that you spare our lives."

"I will do that," replied Black Partridge.

"That is all I ask, — your promise is enough."

What though the captain was not fully satisfied on this point, it would have been untactful to show any doubt.

"Shall we be allowed to go on to Fort Wayne?"

"You must go back to the fort; you may take time to bury your dead, and then you and your men will march into the fort again."

The simple negotiations being completed, Captain Heald asked the question that had been in his mind from the first:

"Black Partridge, where are my two young friends, Jethro Judd and Auric Kingdon?"

Plainly the chief was surprised. He replied that he supposed they were with the captain and his men, and, if they were not, they had probably been killed during the fighting.

CHAPTER XXIV

BEHIND THE RIDGE

It will be recalled that we left our two young friends in a peculiar situation. Jethro Judd, mounted on his horse, had dashed in hot pursuit of the cowardly Miami, who was fleeing on the back of the animal that he had stolen from Auric Kingdon. Jethro speedily discovered that the warrior was as well mounted as he, and pursuit, therefore, was useless. He reined up and, wheeling about, faced his friend, who was bringing up the rear of the procession on foot, with no more chance of success than a tortoise would have in trying to overtake a hare.

"It looks as if we had made a mess of it, Jet," said the disgusted Auric, panting from his exertion; "the loss of the horse isn't pleasant."

"But you shouldn't feel bad, for he didn't belong to you."

"That's why I *do* feel bad; but, as Mr. Kinzie says, there's no use of crying over spilt milk; let's hurry back and help the folks all we can."

It took only a minute or two for the youths to discover that there was little chance of giving any

kind of assistance to their friends out on the plain. When they looked in that direction they saw that the Pottawatomies had emerged from behind the sandy ridge, and, spreading apart so as to surround the soldiers, drawn up behind the wagons, were already firing into them. The defenders, as we know, made a gallant though hopeless fight.

With Jethro sitting on his horse and Auric standing beside him, the two watched the picture with breathless interest. They saw the warriors circling around on the prairie, with the hundreds of Pottawatomies, some erect, others crouching on the ground, and firing into the primitive fort as fast as they could load their guns. To the rear of these, other Indians were running to and fro, all adding to the infernal din. Some of the latter fired their weapons only at intervals, but contented themselves with wild gestures, leaping in the air and shouting, as if to urge their allies to more resolute efforts. It was apparent that these redskins had not much stomach for the fight, and were not likely to have until the excitement of the struggle roused the lurking devil in their nature.

The boys were thrilled by the sight of their friends, who were fighting with the coolness of desperation. In the hot sunlight the flashes of the guns did not show, but a blue, sulphurous vapor hung over the battle-ground, and the lads, who were more than a fourth of a mile away, plainly caught the pungent odor

"Jet, there's no opening for us to get in there," said Auric, when they had contemplated the strange scene for a few minutes.

"No; we can't give the least help, and it's sure death to try it."

The truth of this was manifest. To reach the wagons enclosed by the circle of fire, the youths would have to pass through the horde of furious Pottawatomies. To attempt this would be like leaping over a thousand-foot precipice and hoping to escape unhurt. Not only that, but the situation of the two was growing more perilous every moment. They were so near that they would be sure to draw attention, and on that day the redskins were thirsting for victims wherever they could be found.

"Auric," said his friend from the back of his horse; "it won't do to stay here; we offer too much temptation for those redskins."

"What shall we do?"

"If any of them come for us, you can mount behind me, and we'll scoot after those Miamis."

"Your pony won't have much show if he has to carry double; but I can't leave till I see how our folks make out; there doesn't seem to be any place for us to hide."

"Let's pass behind that ridge, where the redskins gathered before the attack."

It was the only thing the two could do, and there

was some risk in doing that much, for the ridge was so near the battle-ground that some of the contestants were liable at any moment to pass over and come upon the youths; but, as Auric said, they could not leave the neighborhood so long as the fate of their friends was uncertain.

A few minutes later the lads passed behind the ridge, between the contestants and the lake, and, so far as they could judge, no one had noticed their action. The redskins were too intent upon the task before them to pay attention to anything else. Jethro dropped from the saddle, leaving his horse free to go whither he chose.

The comrades cautiously crept up the slope until they could peer over the crest and view the stirring scene. They hoped to witness the close of the drama, and were ready and eager to cut in whenever the chance offered for striking a blow that could aid, even in the slightest degree, their sorely tried friends.

But an unexpected diversion prevented anything of that nature. The two had lain only a few minutes on their faces, with all their faculties centred in that of vision, when a soldier burst through the struggling mob and sped across the prairie at the highest bent of his speed. A glance showed that he was in a blind panic and had no thought but the one of getting away from the awful place. He must have leaped from behind the wagons in the midst of the fight, and,

favored by peculiar circumstances and that strange fortune which no one can understand, he had found his way through the horde of yelling, screeching, shooting, and hacking redskins, until he reached the outer fringe. There he concentrated all his energies in the single one of running, and that he did run fast and as never before was apparent to any one who saw him.

He was a tall, well-formed man and he sped like a deer, but he had gone only a little way when a Winnebago bounded in pursuit, and it took but a brief while for the pursuer to show that he was fleeter of foot than the fugitive. For the few minutes of the chase the attention of our young friends was centred upon the two.

As the white man ran, his cap fell off and his long, black hair streamed in the wind caused by his own speed. He continually glanced over his shoulder, and, when he caught sight of the warrior bearing down upon him, his terror was pitiful. He made a frenzied leap as if pricked with the point of a sword, and flung aside his musket, as if it impeded his flight, which perhaps it did. He sawed the air with his arms which were crooked at the elbows, and took tremendous leaps. Occasionally handfuls of sand were flung backward by his heels. The scared face would have been white with mortal dread had not the horrible heat of the day turned it crimson, over which the perspiration streamed.

The Winnebago ran with more ease. He could afford to do so, for he had no reason to fear. The fugitive was sure to be overtaken, and nothing could save him from the painted demon who was exulting over his triumph. He took long strides, and one could fancy that the pleasure of witnessing the close of the tragedy was an exquisite comedy to the victor.

As the latter sped across the sandy plain he carried his rifle in his left hand. Both of our friends, glancing at him, saw him lay the other hand on his tomahawk, to be ready at the right moment. He meant to slay the soldier with that implement, after which he would call his scalping knife into play.

The picture was terrifying in its intensity. The white man glanced backward no more. He knew the merciless enemy was bearing down upon him with the grim certainty of fate. Flight in reality was useless, but he could not stop and bow his head to his doom. He must keep fleeing, as an animal does after all hope is gone.

When the attention of the youths was first caught, the wretch was making for a point on the ridge a hundred yards or more away, but, in obedience to a blind whim, he swerved in his flight and headed almost directly for the spot where they were lying, with their heads barely showing above the crest.

"That's good!" exclaimed Auric; "leave that Indian for me."

"If you miss, I'll drop him!" said his companion.

"Don't you feel any fear of my missing."

Neither pursued or pursuer observed the youths, whose interest was breathlessly intense from the beginning of the strange struggle. Both had decided to interfere, before either spoke. But fugitive and pursuer were so far off that it was wise to wait till the latter came within certain range. The change of course helped matters, though the soldier might take it into his head to shift his line of flight again.

With the white man coming straight on the picture was distressing beyond description. His crimson countenance gleaming with moisture, his flying hair, his protruding eyes, his swinging arms, and the hopeless, despairing expression of the poor fellow would have stirred pity in the heart of a wild animal. His mouth was open, and his labored breathing was audible, as he summoned his last energies in plunging up the sandy slope.

But there was no throb of pity in the demon, who rapidly gained with every bound of his tireless limbs. He had drawn his tomahawk, and griped it in his right hand, ready for the finishing stroke. Even in that dreadful moment it impressed both youths as remarkable that they did not observe the first glistening of moisture on the countenance of the Winnebago. He could have kept up his pursuit for miles under the flaming sun without exhaustion.

"Good-by, Winnebago!" *Page* 267

Auric Kingdon had already covered the redskin with his gun, slowly moving the muzzle, as necessary, in order to keep him covered. The fugitive did veer again, but so slightly that he would pass a couple of rods to the right of the boys. Jethro also aimed, ready to fire if anything interfered with the success of his friend. The Winnebago was no more certain of his victim than the boys were of the Winnebago.

The panting soldier staggered over the narrow ridge, and started down the slope on the other side, where the youths were lying. As he did so, he collapsed and fell at full length on his face, his forehead ploughing in the sand, along which he slid for several feet. He had reached the limit of his struggle for life, and lay motionless without the first attempt to rise; he awaited the crash of the uplifted tomahawk, his eyes closed and his lips gasping a prayer.

The Winnebago leaped over the crest of the ridge, and, with tomahawk raised, uttered a rasping cry of exultation. At that instant he caught sight of the two youths a few paces away on the ground with both guns levelled, but he had hardly time to take in the meaning of the scene, when Auric Kingdon pressed the trigger.

"Good-by, Winnebago!" he exclaimed, and good-by it was, for the miscreant was slain so quickly that he hardly knew what did it. He emitted a single

screech and sprawled forward, the gun flying from one hand and the hatchet from the other. So energetic was his leap, that he lay near enough to the gasping, half-unconscious soldier, that, had he been alive, he could have touched him with his outstretched hand.

A sudden suspicion caused Auric to forget the rule of reloading his gun before stirring from the spot where he had fired it. He sprang to his feet and ran to where the redskin lay. As he did so, he was followed by Jethro, both crouching so as to prevent any one seeing them from the side of the ridge toward the battle-ground.

The Winnebago, after falling, had turned partly on his side, so that his countenance, with its daubed paint, was exposed to the sunlight. Halting only a pace or two away, Auric leaned forward and peered closely at it.

"By George! I thought so!" he exclaimed, in an excited undertone.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you see who it is?"

"Wag-ma-rah!" replied the other in a whisper.

"Yes; how much he would have preferred to bury his tomahawk in *my* head!" added Auric, with a compression of his lips and a flash of his eyes; "I hope he knew me when he turned his head and looked into the muzzle of my gun."

There was no mistake in the recognition. The Winnebago tribe never produced a more diabolical miscreant than Wag-ma-rah, and there was something fitting that he should meet his fate at the hands of the youth whose life he had sought so persistently, and that, too, when such an interposition saved an innocent man.

Auric now coolly reloaded his rifle, and the two gave attention to the man whom they had saved from a shocking death.

CHAPTER XXV

PRIVATE DUGRON

During these exciting moments the soldier lay as if dead. His collapse was so complete and his despair so utter, that the report of the rifle and the shriek of the stricken Winnebago seemed a part of his own dissolution. He did not look up nor stir, nor did the sounds of the voices near him bring back his scattered senses.

Jethro looked wonderingly down upon him. Had he not seen his heaving sides he would have believed he had died of fright and exhaustion. A certain contempt for the wild terror he had shown stirred both youths. Auric touched him rather roughly with his foot.

"Stir yourself! The Indian who was after your scalp is dead!"

He had to be addressed several times before he lifted his head and turned his face toward the boys standing beside him. His hurried panting rapidly subsided, but he was still dazed. He stared at the youths without speaking. Then he noticed the form of the Winnebago stretched at his side.

"You're the worst scared man I ever saw," said

Auric; "what made you run from that Indian when you knew he would overtake you? Why didn't you turn and have it out with him before all your strength left you?"

Still silent, the fellow pulled himself sufficiently together to assume the sitting posture on the sand. He looked from one face to the other, and then, as his breathing became more natural, he grinned mirthlessly and muttered an oath.

"Wal, if this doesn't beat the mischief, then my name ain't Cal Dugron! I've seen you yunkers at the fort, I think."

"I shouldn't wonder if you did," replied Jethro; "we have been there a good many times."

"What are you doing here?"

"My friend Auric there tried to convince that Winnebago that it wasn't best to keep up his pursuit of you, and it looks as if he succeeded."

"Does sort of look that way," replied the soldier, with a shudder, as he glanced at the inanimate form beside him; "say, yunkers, did you ever see a bigger fool than Captain Heald?"

"Yes," replied Jethro.

"Who?"

"You."

The man showed he had fully regained his wits, by throwing back his head and laughing heartily though silently.

"I'll be hanged if you're fur out the way; I reckon I *did* make a show of myself, a runnin' away from that Injin, — did you say he is a Winnebago?"

"He *was* a Winnebago, but he isn't much of anything just now; I thought those Miamis were the worst cowards I ever saw, but they can't beat you."

Somehow the boys could not help expressing their scorn of the figure the soldier made in his headlong flight from his comrades. The fact that he was disposed to admit everything so cheerfully did not lessen their contempt. Still sitting on the ground he clasped his arms about his up-drawn knees and gazed thoughtfully in the direction of the lake, as if communing with himself.

"I'll be shot if I understand how it happened; I was right in among the boys blazing away at the redskins as fast as I could load and pull trigger, when that Injin a-laying there made a leap from the ground right in front of me where I hadn't seen him. He let out a yell as he done so and looked like the devil himself. I wasn't expecting anything of the kind, and I'll own that all my senses left me in a flash; I hardly know what I done, but I was that scared that I thought the whole party were follering him, and would be on top of us the next minute; so I lit out and run for all I was worth."

"That's what you did," said Auric; "you were the only one who did so; the others had enough grit to

stay where they were and where they are still putting up a good fight; you ought to be there doing your part."

By this time the fellow was himself. He looked again into the faces of the two youths who now sat down, and grinned.

"I'll own up to what you say, but don't rub it in too hard; I've been in bad scrapes before, but this is the first time I ever got the blue funks; it was the suddenness of the thing that knocked the props from under me. I'm wondering too," he added, with an increase of his expansive grin, "that if it's such a crime for me to be here, and that if the folks over yonder need every one, how is it I find *you* sneaking behind this ridge at this time."

"We have a good explanation," replied Jethro, who thereupon made it plain how he and his companion were caught outside the breastworks.

Further conversation awoke some respect for Calvin Dugron. It was clear from what he said that he was the victim of one of those sudden, unaccountable panics which sometimes seize the bravest men. Had he been given a few seconds in which to prepare for the rush of Wag-ma-rah, it may be doubted whether he would have fled at all. Rather he would have held his ground, and put up as brave a fight as his comrades. He had now become his natural self and showed something of the spirit of a soldier.

Suddenly the soldier glanced sharply around him.

"Where the mischief is my gun?" he asked, as if he suspected the youths of hiding the weapon.

"That's a fine question to ask," replied Auric; "was it loaded?"

"I think so; do you know anything about it?"

"You threw it away when fleeing from that Winnebago."

For a minute or so, the man believed the boys were jesting. But, convinced they were in earnest, he crept up the side of the ridge and peered over. The others did the same, for they wondered, how they had come to suspend for even a brief interval their interest in the fighting between the soldiers and their escort. To their amazement, the conflict seemed over. The Indians were holding substantially the same position as before, but no one fired a gun.

"It looks as if they had surrendered," suggested the scared Jethro.

"If they haven't, they soon will; what part are *we* to play in it? What's the matter with Dugron?" suddenly asked Auric.

One would suppose that the interest of the soldier would lie in the same direction as that of the youths, but in looking toward the cluster of wagons, with the red men gathered round, and over the prairie, he had caught sight of his discarded rifle, where he had flung it, when speeding in terror across the plain. The spot

was about a third of the way to where Captain Heald was holding his negotiations with Black Partridge.

At sight of the weapon, Dugron uttered a forceful exclamation, and, rising to his feet, stalked over the summit and down the other side. He meant to recover the gun, though he had to walk straight toward the Pottawatomies, and was sure to draw attention to himself. The startled Auric called to him to return, but he paid no heed.

"I wonder if he will start and run again," said he, "if one of the warriors takes a fancy to his scalp."

"I believe he is a brave man, who gave way to a sudden panic; watch him!"

In the interest of the moment, and because of the lull in the battle, the boys kept their attention upon the man, who certainly showed wonderful nerve in what he did. He walked as erect as if on parade, and neither hastened nor retarded his footsteps. He acted like a man who had plenty of time at command but none to throw away, while, as for fear, he was a stranger to it.

On he went, till he came to where the gun gleamed in the hot sunlight. He stooped and, picking it up, deliberately examined the lock, as if to learn whether it was injured. He found it not only intact, but loaded! At any moment, when straining every nerve to escape Wag-ma-rah, he could have wheeled and shot him dead. If Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd had been

disgusted at sight of the flying fugitive, how did that fugitive feel toward himself, when he realized the whole grotesque truth?

At this juncture, the youths were far more nervous than the man. They were certain that his act would draw attention, and that not one, but several of the Pottawatomies would give chase. Nothing of the kind, however, took place. No doubt the lone figure was observed by more than one of the warriors, but they were too much interested just then in what was going on nearer them.

On his way up the slope, Dugron glanced around once, as if to learn whether he had drawn pursuit, but finding he had not, he came over and joined the boys on the other side of the crest.

"I've changed my style of travel since I left camp," was his grim remark.

"How would it have been had you been pursued?" Jethro could not help asking.

"Don't think I'd show so much hurry," was the reply.

"You did the most foolish thing in the world," said Auric.

"Why so? What good is a chap in these parts without a gun?"

"You could have had *his*," and the youth pointed to the weapon which flew from the hand of the Winnebago when he fell.

"I'm not used to that and couldn't have done as well with it as my own; — wait!"

He walked a few steps and picked up the rifle, from where it lay a few feet beyond the body, and turned it over in his hand.

"Just what I expected," he said, impatiently flinging the weapon down; "the hammer was busted by that fall, and the whole thing ain't worth a penny, but the late warrior has something else that's worth taking."

The next proceeding of the soldier was characteristic. He twisted the stopper from the powder-horn of the Winnebago, did the same with his own, and, fitting the narrow, circular mouths together, poured all the black grains from one into the other. The leathern bullet pouch, when rattled, showed that it contained several spheres of lead, which were also transferred to the pouch of the soldier.

"There!" was the cool remark, as the man straightened up; "I guess you can't do us any more good. Wal, yunkers, what's the word?"

"We want to advise together, for we don't know what's best to do," replied Auric.

"Explain."

Private Dugron showed that he had not bidden good-by to all prudence, for now, instead of maintaining his upright posture, where his head and shoulders were in view from the danger side, he lowered his body.

In doing this, he did it in a peculiar manner, by a series of regular, downward jerks until his head was below the crest, and shut off from sight. His object was to imitate a man walking down the slope, so that if any of the Pottawatomies were looking in that direction they would think the soldier was walking.

Auric explained the problem that puzzled him and his friend.

"There's no doubt that Captain Heald has surrendered what is left of his party to Black Partridge; is it safe to believe *we* are included?"

"Not a bit of it," was the emphatic response of the soldier, who now raised his head enough to peer over the crest of the ridge.

"Suppose we demand to be included?" suggested Jethro.

Private Dugron turned and looked silently into the boyish countenance, as if to assure himself the youth was in earnest. Then he swore impatiently.

"Demand to be included," he repeated, "as if Black Partridge and the rest of 'em care a darn for your demand. The chances are that they will massacre every one of the party after they have completed their surrender."

"If that is so we wish to take our chances with them," remarked Auric with emotion.

"It's worse with you than with them, if such a thing can be," explained their friend; "you see we

are all out here beyond the varmints; we must pass through their lines to reach Captain Heald and the rest of your friends; it's as sure as shooting that they would never let one of us get through; we should be cut down the minute we came within reach of 'em."

Auric and Jethro could not deny the truth of this view. If there was anything in the vague claim that they were included in the surrender, the Pottawatomies could well say that the three were not members of the party of whites when submission was made and terms granted, but there would never be a chance for making such an appeal. The excitement was too hot for anything of that nature. Private Dugron was right.

One thing was evident to all three; they must not stay where they were, for nothing was to be gained by so doing, and their peril was increasing with every passing minute. The discussions which had already taken place and which now followed occupied less time than would be supposed.

By stealthily peering over the ridge, they were not long in discovering that Captain Heald had surrendered himself and men to Black Partridge and his Pottawatomies. They had given up their weapons and were defenceless. As soon as the wagons could be used with the aid of the crippled teams, the mournful procession started northward on its return to Fort Dearborn, escorted by the treacherous warriors, whom

their chiefs found it hard to hold in check. It was a dismal scene and the lads were weighed down with a great dread.

The natural question of the youths was as to what was to be gained by offering to surrender, as was their first intention. It was out of their power to give the slightest help to the others, and Private Dugron was right when he declared that such action on their part would be the height of folly. Who but a natural born idiot would submit to a band of Indians on the war path when it could be avoided?

So it was that the three abandoned all thought of surrender. Instead, they would set their faces toward Fort Wayne, passing round the head of the lake, and making all haste to the distant post. They could not use Jethro Judd's horse, for, when they came to look for him, he had disappeared, having wandered off while the three were giving their attention to more important matters, and it was now useless to look for him.

The immediate danger was from the Pottawatomies, who, now that the return march to the fort had begun, were straying here and there, some mounted, but the majority on foot. They were ripe for mischief, and if they once caught sight of the three would swoop down upon them. All that separated the parties was the slight sandy ridge and a moderate stretch of prairie. If any of the redskins came over that, it

would be all up with our friends. The hope of the latter lay in the fact that the prisoners and their escort were moving northward, while their own destination was to the south.

The ridge to which allusion has so often been made did not extend for more than an eighth of a mile parallel with the lake. Beyond that point the prairie was level, but at a comparatively short distance the wood began. If that could be penetrated without detection the prospects of the little party would be good.

"Let's sneak," suggested the soldier, who had so established himself in the respect of the youths that they deferred to him.

"Where to?" asked Auric.

"As fur as this ridge runs; then we'll wait till the varmints are a good way off and scoot for the woods; when we reach them we can take care of ourselves."

"Unless some of the Pottawatomies or Winnebagoes are there."

"Why would they stay there, when there is a chance for plunder at the fort? The only varmints likely to be found in them parts is the Miamis."

"The Miamis!" repeated Jethro with a sniff of contempt; "they're the worst cowards in the Territory; they aren't worth a thought."

"Besides," added the similarly disgusted Auric,

"they are still running toward Fort Wayne and must be miles off."

"When I seen 'em," added Private Dugron with a grin, "they was runnin' like I was a while ago, and I know they couldn't keep that up; they must have had to stop to rest; come on."

The plan was followed. With the soldier in advance they passed to the base of the ridge and kept along that to the southward. Now and then one of them peeped over the summit. The motley horde of redskins were seen in the distance, all moving northward with their dejected prisoners. Thus the space between the three and their friends steadily widened.

All went well until the trio reached the point where the ridge blended with the plain and the open confronted them. Its width was nearly a fourth of a mile, and beyond that the woods appeared, stretching indefinitely to the southward. On their left was heard the low booming of Lake Michigan, and now and then a whiff of the cool air fanned their fevered faces, but most of the time the pitiless sun beat down, as on the blistering wastes of Sahara. But for the stress of the excitement which held them up, they must have sought the shade or the refreshing embrace of the inland sea.

It would seem as if our friends had crossed the zone of danger, and that with the simplest prudence they must reach the sheltering stockades of Fort

Wayne. Certainly they could think of no reason why any of the Pottawatomies or Winnebagoes should be lurking near, while there was every ground for believing they had been drawn in the direction of Dearborn, because of the loot awaiting them there.

But those who live on the frontier or in an Indian country know how deceptive the signs of peace and security often prove. Private Dugron and his young companions ceased to give attention to Black Partridge and his captives; the peril, if there were any peril, must confront them to the south.

Not one of the three could discover anything amiss. The woods were quite dense and contained considerable undergrowth. The trail connecting Forts Wayne and Dearborn led through it, and was more or less familiar to all. Perhaps because of the cool, inviting shadow of the forest, the study of the wilderness was brief. The three moved forward, the soldier in the lead and all in Indian file.

As they advanced, they scrutinized the shelter closely. It would seem that the lads, because of their training, were better skilled in woodcraft than the man. In all respects except one they were. He was gifted with an acuteness of hearing remarkable in its way and which often gave him peculiar advantage. Thus it came about that they had not penetrated far into the wood, when, although he was a few steps in advance, the private abruptly halted.

"I heard something," he explained; "it isn't best for us to stay together like this, for if one is catched all will be catched. 'Spose you, Auric, keep a little in front, with Jet next, while I'll act as rear guard."

The plan was so sensible that it was adopted at once. The boys remained in sight of each other, as they made their way over the trail, but the soldier fell so far to the rear that he disappeared altogether, even when the path was quite straight.

Private Dugron did not hint to his young friends that the suspicious noise which he detected was from the rear. They did not suspect it at the time, but he knew it meant that, despite all their caution, the redskins were after them.

The first startling warning to Auric and Jethro came with the shout of the soldier from some invisible though not distant point at the rear:

"*Take to cover, yunkers! The varmints are on us!*"

Instead of running along the trail, both turned off and sought concealment in the depths of the wood. While doing so, they heard the report of the soldier's gun, and then all became like the tomb. The Indians, contrary to their usual custom, were acting silently. The youths, with throbbing hearts, remained hiding behind the trees they had selected, peering out among the trunks toward the trail, and expecting each instant to catch sight of the Pottawatomies hunting for them. But the minutes stretched into a half hour and then

a full hour, without bringing the first sign. Then with the utmost stealth the two stole back alongside the path, until they came to the spot whence the warning had been sent to them. There lay the body of Private Dugron, dead and scalped. He had voluntarily given his life for those who had saved him, and thereby proved, if the proof were needed, that he was not only a brave but a noble man.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WARNING VOICE

It was not until some time after the discovery of the dead body of Private Dugron that the youths fully understood the chivalrous gratitude of that gallant soldier. They could not know that while threading their way through the wood his keen sense of hearing told him that danger threatened from the rear, but they knew that in some way he had discovered or at least suspected it. He then deliberately sent them in advance over the trail, while he remained behind to fight off the peril which quickly appeared. He had striven against odds which he must have known were fatal. He might have had the help of the boys, had he called for it, and they would have been quick to respond. The chances, however, were overwhelmingly against such aid availing anything. So he called out his warning, fired his gun, and perished.

The tragedy taught its lesson. If the noble soldier had been slain, those who did it could not be far off. Had the youths been less skilful in their reconnoissance, they must have speedily suffered the same fate. Where were the Indians who had been checked by

the brief fight of Dugron? It would seem they must be near at hand.

Instinctively the two withdrew deeper into the wood, making their way like a couple of veteran scouts, until they reached a point where it was safe to pause a while to decide what to do.

"They must have been Pottawatomies or Winnebagoes who belong to Black Partridge's band," said Jethro.

"I suspected they were Miamis," said Auric; "for it would be just like them, after running off as they did."

"But you remember that all the Miamis fled before the fighting began; that placed them between us and Fort Wayne; these came from the rear."

"I guess you're right, but if we go to Fort Wayne we are sure to run into some of those Miamis, and they are like so many rattlesnakes; I can't help feeling, Jet, that the right thing for us to do is to go back to Dearborn and join the folks there."

"But, as poor Dugron told us, we can't do that without meeting some of the redskins; we shall be so far from Black Partridge and his chiefs that his warriors won't allow us to be classed with those that have been surrendered and spared."

"How do you know they have been spared?" was the significant question of Auric.

"We can't know for certain for some time to come,

but, if they had begun massacring the prisoners, some of them would have managed to get away and would have fled in this direction, but we haven't caught a sign of a fugitive."

After talking further, the boys agreed that they would make every effort to join their friends at Dearborn. Jethro named a deciding factor in the question.

"No matter what happens, I don't believe they will kill Mr. Kinzie; he has too many friends among the Indians; he will be allowed to go back to his house and no one will harm him there; we will wait till night and then steal over to him."

"It will be ticklish work, but I think as you do, that it's the right thing. I wish his folks could be there with him, but they must be well on their way to St. Joseph by this time."

Naturally the boys could not know that the boat, as has been told, had been stopped at the mouth of the river and never went beyond that point.

You will bear in mind that Jethro and Auric were well to the south of Fort Dearborn, and a tramp of several miles was necessary to reach the home of the trader. It was impossible to do this in the daytime without detection, and the same danger menaced them to a less degree at night. But they, and especially Jethro, were familiar with the region, and were hopeful that they could outwit the redskins who would not know of any such attempt on their part.

Without dwelling upon the wearisome hours, it may be said, therefore, that the comrades withdrew a little farther into the wood, and patiently waited until the oppressive summer day drew to a close. Stretched out in the twilight of the woods, they were able to spend most of the afternoon in sleep. Thus they gained the needed strength for the ordeal before them. The only trouble was that they had not eaten a mouthful since early that morning. That, however, was not so serious as might be supposed. The sultry temperature and the woful incidents of the day were not calculated to give one an appetite. Jethro recalled that not far in the direction of the lake he had once gathered blackberries. He led the way to the same spot, and they found such an abundance of luscious fruit that they fully satisfied their hunger.

"That will serve till to-morrow," said Jethro with no little satisfaction; "and I hope we shall eat the next meal at Mr. Kinzie's table."

The lads had agreed upon their course. Instead of keeping close to the lake they circled far to the westward. Their intention was to flank the battle-ground by so wide a margin that there would hardly be a possibility of meeting any of the Indians. The hope of doing this was reasonable, for there was no conceivable cause why any of the marauders should linger in that section.

The journey was begun as soon as night was fully

come, and before the brilliant moon had risen. The woodcraft of the boys led them to go farther to the west than they had planned. It was wise to err on the side of extreme caution.

As the two walked side by side over the sandy plain, each carrying his loaded rifle in a trailing position and talking in whispers, they scanned the gloom on every side. There could be no absolute certainty that enemies were not near. If the youths were discovered, their situation would be virtually hopeless, for there was no immediate refuge within reach, and they had no means of fortifying themselves even in the crudest manner. They were heading toward the woods to the north, and which continued almost to the home of trader Kinzie. That shelter once reached, they would feel that the real crisis was over.

The couple walked briskly, as all boys do when passing a dangerous spot, and their flitting glances took in every point in the field of vision. The profound silence that reigned after the fearful turmoil of the forenoon was more impressive because of the contrast.

The two were advancing in this cautious manner, neither having spoken for some minutes, when Jethro suddenly griped the arm of his companion, who, like him, instantly halted.

"What is it?" asked Auric, in an almost inaudible whisper.

By way of answer, Jethro pointed a little to the right of the course they were following, adding in the same guarded undertone:

"I think some one is out there."

Gazing intently at the point, it seemed as if there was a slight deepening of the gloom, but neither could see clearly enough to make sure. The lads showed their training in the ways of the wood by doing something at the same moment and without either influencing the other. They softly lay down and pressed their ears to the ground.

Jethro was right in his suspicion. Through the better conductor afforded by the earth they heard the faint but distinct thump of a horse's hoofs. The sound showed there was only a single animal, though others might well be within call.

Jethro raised his head and looked toward the spot where the vague form had caught his eye.

"He's coming this way as sure as a gun!" he softly exclaimed; "shall we make a run for the woods? They're not far off."

"He may change his course and pass without seeing us."

"His horse won't."

"Well," was the significant remark of Auric; "each of our guns is loaded."

"What about the others?"

"There aren't any others near enough to count;

after we have dropped this redskin, it will be time enough to dash for the shelter."

The plan was the best that could be formulated. Both lay flat on the sand and fixed their eyes on the horseman whose outlines could be distinguished so clearly as to prove he was approaching. The animal was slowly walking, and headed straight for the prostrate figures in the sand.

Each lay with his gun ready for instant use. Suddenly Jethro touched the leg of his companion with his toe. Without any apparent cause the animal sheered to the left. While he must necessarily approach closer to the lads, yet each now felt the hope that the redskin would not perceive them. The same could hardly be expected of the horse.

Just as the youths expected, the animal at the moment he came opposite the silent forms in the sand pricked his ears and whinnied: he had scented them. The next natural proceeding was for the warrior to change his course and ride forward to learn the cause of the alarm of his horse. Instead of doing that, he jerked the head of the beast to the left, struck his ribs with his heels, and galloped out of sight. Fortunately for him he was too scared to investigate. The first attempt to do so would have been the signal for his death.

"We're more lucky than I expected," remarked Jethro, as the two came nimbly to their feet and resumed their walk toward the wood.

"The redskin couldn't have seen us."

"No, but he knew *something* was there and he didn't fancy it. We have been mighty lucky so far, Auric, but it is still a long way to Mr. Kinzie's home."

"We must be close to the woods."

"Only a few rods — *quick! run!*"

It was the sound of galloping hoofs that caused this exclamation. They had congratulated themselves too soon. Not one Indian but eight or ten were bearing down upon them at full speed. The youths bounded away like a couple of deer, their pursuers so near and coming with such haste that they were sure to overtake them before they could reach the shelter, even though it loomed up in sight.

I have said more than once that Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd had been trained to exceptional skill in woodcraft, and I think it will be admitted that proofs have been given of their ability in that line. The most striking exhibition now occurred. In describing what took place, when a party of Pottawatomie horsemen dashed after them, bear in mind that neither youth spoke a word. They acted in perfect unison, they did exactly the right thing at the right moment, and that without the slightest prompting of one by the other.

They ran at the highest bent of speed until within a few rods of the wood, when they saw they would not be able to reach the refuge in advance of their

pursuers. Instantly they stopped short, wheeled about, brought their guns to their shoulders, took quick aim and let fly. A rasping cry, and the sight of one warrior plunging headlong from his animal showed the result of this unexpected act. If a second redskin was struck, he gave no evidence of it.

Because of the fire, the horsemen were thrown into confusion and the pursuit was checked for a few seconds. Those few seconds were what the fugitives needed, for, no sooner were their guns discharged, than they turned again and a few bounds carried them into the protecting gloom of the wood. You will agree that the occasion was one of those rare ones when neither could follow the rule of the frontier which requires one to hold his position, after using his gun, until it is reloaded.

It was this prompt action which saved the two for the time. They deserved full success, but did not attain it. By one of those perversities of fate for which there is no accounting, six or eight Indians happened to be in the wood, directly behind the lads, and were probably making their way to the open plain. What complication could be more remarkable than that our two young friends should thus be caught exactly between two fires?

It was so dark under the thick foliage, the moon having hardly appeared in the horizon, that Auric and Jethro could not see each other, although their

elbows almost touched. For the moment they were at their wits' end. It seemed as if they could do nothing, for whichever way they turned they were sure to run against one or more of their enemies. The horsemen, having reached the edge of the wood, flung themselves from their animals, and with little hesitation pressed in among the shadows. They exchanged signals with the new arrivals, and an understanding was reached with only a few seconds' delay.

Had the boys dreamed of anything of this nature, they would have changed the line of their flight and thus gained a chance to do some desperate dodging among the trees. But it was too late now for anything of the kind.

"Let's climb among the limbs," whispered Jethro, who could think of nothing else.

"They will hear us; wait a minute before we try it."

Jethro held his ground, not daring even to attempt to reload his rifle. In the oppressive stillness, when it seemed that the beating of his heart must betray him to the redskins who were on every side, he fancied he heard a gentle rustling of the leaves at his feet. He could not guess its meaning, and did not ask his comrade.

It was at this crisis, when the nerves of the youths were keyed to the tensest point, that an angry voice shouted near at hand:

"Dogs of Pottawatomies! Do you not know the whites have surrendered and their lives must be spared? Go back to the camp at the fort and get your share of the goods that await you! If you do not go now, none shall be given you! It is Black Partridge who speaks!"

The effect was remarkable. How came the dreaded chieftain of the Pottawatomies to be on the spot at the critical moment? How was it he intervened when, had he delayed doing so for a few precious minutes, nothing could have saved the two youths?

The warriors did not try to answer the question. They knew their leader had a way of appearing at the most unexpected times, and what took place was only a repetition of what had occurred before. They might have mutinied earlier in the day, but they dared not do so now. Moreover, it was not likely he was alone. He was ready to visit swift vengeance upon any one who dared gainsay him.

Therefore, the warriors obeyed the command on the instant without question. The horsemen slunk out of the wood to where they had left their animals, and where the motionless form of one of their number lay stretched on the earth. Those on foot stealthily followed, and all met on the margin of the prairie.

The boys were quick to take advantage of the chance thus given them. A few whispered words and they

stole from the spot, not pausing until they felt it safe for them to stop.

"Jet," said his friend, "did you understand those words of Black Partridge?"

"You know I can't speak a word of Pottawatomie."

Auric translated them for him, and, as he did so, he chuckled:

"Did you recognize his voice?"

"I wasn't sure whether it was his or one of the redskins who were on all sides of us, but I know now whose voice it was."

"Whose?"

"The name of the chief was Auric Kingdon; you did a mighty cute thing, old fellow; I wonder they were deceived."

"They won't be for long; Jet, you ought to learn Pottawatomie; what would have become of us if I hadn't known their lingo! I'll give you lessons."

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

THE rustling which Jethro had heard at his feet was caused by his companion, who deemed it better for the success of his daring trick that he should be at a little distance from the spot when he resorted to it. He was familiar enough with Black Partridge to give a fair imitation of his voice, though, as he feared, it did not take the Pottawatomies long to detect the clever deception practised upon them. More than one knew of the remarkable lingual ability of the youth from Fort Wayne, while it is to be believed that others observed the slight difference in the tones. The majority, however, were misled just long enough to give the youths the few minutes to place themselves beyond danger of detection from this particular band of redskins.

But they well knew the dangerous road which remained to be travelled. Three separate times it looked as if discovery could not be averted, but they were fortunate beyond their expectations, and finally reached the home of Mr. Kinzie, where it may be said their danger was over for the time. They found

the trader seated on the piazza of his home, smoking his pipe, while within the spacious dwelling every other member of the family was asleep, after the woful experiences of the day. In addition to his own precious household, Mrs. Helm and several other women had been brought in during the afternoon.

The depression of spirits on the part of the trader was caused not only by the great tragedy itself, but by the belief that Auric and Jethro were among the victims. He listened with profound interest to their story and uttered an expression of devout gratitude over their wonderful fortune.

"Others will be happy when they meet you in the morning. But you must be hungry, boys," added the trader, with the hospitality that was one of the characteristics of those who dwelt on the frontier.

"We had a meal some hours ago and care for nothing more; we hope to sit at the board with you at breakfast, as we have done so many times."

Seated thus, with the noise, the passing to and fro, the confusion and all the signs of the disastrous tragedy across the river, where the captured fort and outbuildings stood, the trader gave his narrative of the dismal experiences of the day.

Although, as we know, the boat containing his family, Mrs. Helm and other friends was stopped and held at the mouth of the stream, none of the inmates was harmed, and all were allowed to return

to Fort Dearborn that afternoon. Their lives were spared because of the high regard Mr. Kinzie had won among the Indians.

Captain Heald surrendered to Black Partridge, for the reason that nothing else was left for him to do. The chieftain promised to spare the lives of all the whites and he kept the promise, although more than once his bloodthirsty warriors threatened to get away from him and to complete the massacre that had been begun earlier in the day.

When the prisoners had given up their arms they were marched back to the Indian encampment. In the fight on the shore of the lake, twenty-six soldiers, twelve militiamen, two women, and twelve children were killed. Among the massacred was the surgeon. Inasmuch as many were wounded, Mr. Kinzie took the place of the physician and extracted a good many bullets with his penknife. He did his work with a skill that won the admiration even of the Indians, who had never seen anything of the kind done.

We have told of the wounding of Mrs. Heald. Her husband was also badly hurt. The two were paddled to the mouth of the St. Joseph, where they were cared for by a trader. When they had partly recovered, Captain Heald hired a Frenchman to take him to Mackinaw, and some time later he was exchanged. The remaining prisoners after a time were exchanged.

Fort Dearborn was plundered and burned the next morning. Mr. Kinzie found matters so threatening that he decided to abandon his home until the close of the war. He crossed the lake to St. Joseph and thence made his way to Detroit. Among the friends who accompanied him were Auric Kingdon and Jethro Judd. The following year, both boys enlisted in the service of their country, and passed through the war without a wound. Auric served under the command of his father, who was slain at the battle of the Thames, when Tecumseh, the famous Shawanoe chieftain, fell. One of the singular facts connected with Auric and Jethro was that both were living in Chicago when the stupendous conflagration of October, 1871, occurred. They were in comfortable circumstances, and lost every penny they possessed in the world. But each was the father and grandfather of a goodly number of descendants, who gladly seized the opportunity to show their love for the venerable men who, in their earlier years, suffered and did so much for their country. Jethro died the year following, but Auric did not pass away until, hale, genial, and contented, he was able to look back over more than fourscore years of "duty well done."

The region about the ruins of Fort Dearborn was deserted, even by the fur traders and hunters, until 1816, when the fort was rebuilt and occupied by United States troops until 1837. In that year it was

abandoned because the Indians had removed farther westward. The old blockhouse was demolished in 1856. It stood on the south bank of the river, a little east of where Rush Street Bridge was afterwards built. One old dilapidated, decaying building stood until the great conflagration, when the last relic of military rule was swept away.

THE END.

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